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Studies in Buddhist Iconography

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by

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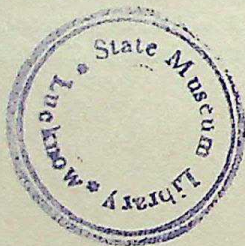
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Dedicated
To The Memory Of
My Father
Shri Kshitis Chandra Bhattacharyya

Abbreviations

- ADV* *Advayavajrasaṅgraha*, ed. H. P. Shastri, Gaekwad's Oriental Series No. XL, Baroda, 1927.
- AVA* *Introduction a l'etude d'Avalokiteśvara*, Paris, 1948.
- DHI* *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1956.
- DKS* *Dharmakośa-Saṅgraha* of Amṛitānanda. Asiatic Soc. Ms. No. G. 8055.
- Ep.Ind.* *Epigraphia Indica*.
- Etude* *Etude Sur l'Iconographie Buddhique de l'Inde* by A. Foucher.
- GNB* *The Gods of Northern Buddhism* by A. Getty.
- IBI* *The Indian Buddhist Iconography* by B. Bhattacharyya.
- JAS* *Journal of the Asiatic Society*.
- JASB* *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.
- JISOA* *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*.
- Manju* *Etude Iconographique sur Mañjuśrī* by Mallmann.
- NSP* *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, ed. B. Bhattacharyya.
- SIS* *A Survey of Indian Sculpture* by S.K. Saraswati.
- SM* *Sāadhanamālā* (2 vols), ed. B. Bhattacharyya.
- TBIS* *Tāntric Buddhist Iconographic Sources* by D.C. Bhattacharyya.
- TLP* *Two Lamaistic Pantheons* by W. E. Clark.

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PREFACE

The first aim of any study of art history should be to read properly the objects of art. For the understanding of the language of the art, it is essential to know the structural significance of each of the visual forms and their relationship with the analogous manifestations of human activity. This will necessitate the undertaking of an approach which is objective in methodology, but subjective in motivation. In this study of Buddhist art, therefore, due coverage had to be given of the descriptive observation of the external features of the images of Buddhist art and also of the permissible speculation about their narrative content and its antecedence. Even to do this, of course with a mere partial success, it was needed to prepare something like an inventory of the iconographic types, since it was felt that, for the identification of the core-motif of the iconography and for the understanding of the continuous process of its development, it is imperative to take into account all possible descriptive minutia. The present volume contains the results of only an humble attempt in this direction.

The expression "studies" in the title of the present book is intended as an apology for the inadequacy of the treatment of the topic. I hope to be able subsequently to put in more labour and patience for the completion of the project of the study of the iconography of the remaining deities of Buddhism.

While referring to the textual source-materials, I have not quoted the relevant passages from the *Sādhnamālā* or the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, but have only given their free English translation together with the references to the original extracts available in the well-known published texts of these two works under the Gaekwad's Oriental Series. Other Sanskrit passages have also been similarly referred to, since most of them have already been published in my *Tāntric Buddhist Iconographic Sources*.

Every care has been taken to expunge at least the objective errors. For the inadvertent mistakes and shortcomings I crave the indulgence of my esteemed readers.

This work was done under the supervision of Professor S.K. Saraswati. I take this opportunity to express respectfully my deep indebtedness to him for his constant creative guidance and for favours too many to mention. If I have been able to put in anything worthwhile in this book, the credit has to go to him. For all lapses and shortcomings the responsibility is entirely mine, and they have to be ascribed to my incompetence to represent properly the message of my great teacher.

I must also express my thanks and gratefulness to two of my senior friends: Professor Dr. Bratindra Nath Mukherjee and Dr. Pratapaditya Pal, not only for the inspiration that I received from them, but also because they have been my constant metors, particularly in academic matters.

I am thankful to the authorities of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta for having

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given me free access to their valuable collection of Buddhist manuscripts. I also acknowledge, with thanks, the courtesy that I received while studying at similar other institutions. Thankful acknowledgement has been made elsewhere in this book of the use of photographs from public and private collections.

My wife, Shrimati Nilima Bhattacharyya, M.A., has done me a favour by preparing the index for the book. For this I am grateful to her.

My publisher, Mr. Ramesh C. Jain, eloquently deserves my thanks and gratitude for the able leadership that he has given for the publication of the book.

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Dipak Chandra Bhattacharyya

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American Academy for Indian studies, Banaras; Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi; Asiatic Society, Calcutta; Asutosh Museum, Calcutta University; Bharat Kala Bhavan, Banaras; British Museum, London; Cambridge University Library, Cambridge; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Mr. Narendra Nath Singhi; Dr. Pratapaditya Pal; Riksmuseum Voor Volkerkunde, Leiden; Mr. Santosh Kumar Bose; Professor S.K. Saraswati.

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ONE

Introduction

I

Every student of Buddhist iconography is perhaps well aware that there was a profusion of gods and goddesses in the Buddhist pantheon during the later phases of its development. The excessive increase in the number of divine concepts was mainly due to the Buddhist belief, during this period, in the efficacy of the *mantras* (mystic formulae). These *mantras* were considered not only efficacious but also sacred, because they were believed to be the words of the Lord.¹ The efficacy and the sanctity of the *mantras* no doubt endowed them with potential divinity. Naturally, many such *mantras* were deified together with the relevant iconographic specifications. In fact, during this period, the Buddhists 'started an unrelenting process of deification' by turning all objects and subjects within human comprehension into divine concepts,² each of them endowed with a proper iconography, which again had a number of variations originating out of individual or group preferences. As a result of this, there was a bewildering increase in the numerical strength of Buddhist iconic concepts and their typological variations.

It has not yet been possible to study the iconography of all these numerous gods and goddesses. From the study of the *Sādhnamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* and several other tāntric Buddhist works, together with that of the images of Buddhist deities discovered so far, the iconography of a good number of Buddhist gods and goddesses has been known to us. But the study of Buddhist iconography, which has already been made, is in no way exhaustive. There remains much to be done.

Iconographic study is basically of two types. First, the descriptive study, which concerns mainly with the formal and physical features of the images studied with reference to the prescriptive corroborations available from texts. Second, the historical study, which takes into account the various factors giving rise to, and

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contributing to the gradual evolution of, the different iconographic concepts. As far as Buddhist iconography is concerned, it is felt that the latter type of study, the historical, has not received due attention from scholars. Long time back, Waddell and after him Hiranand Sastri investigated into the rise and development of the concept of the Buddhist goddess Tārā.³ But a reassessment of their studies, in the light of data discovered subsequently, has not yet been undertaken by any scholar, although some recent studies have touched upon a few stray points connected with the problem.⁴ Conze in his study of the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā⁵ no doubt discusses the question of the origin and development of the concept of the goddess. But we will see how the study which he initiated can be furthered with the help of the newly discovered materials. So far as the historical study of the conceptual development of Buddhist iconographic types is concerned, the most notable contribution has perhaps been made by Mallmann in course of her study of the iconography of the Bodhisattvas—Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī.⁶ Foucher, Bhattacharyya, Getty and many other pioneers in the field of Buddhist iconography have stressed more the descriptive study rather than the historical.⁷ Coomaraswamy also made valuable contribution to the study of Buddhist iconography.⁸ Although he did not study the iconography of any particular god or goddess of tāntric Buddhism, his scholarly analysis of the historical and socio-psychological aspects of the various myths and symbols connected with Buddhist iconography, and his masterly exposition of the various factors leading to the origin of the image of the Buddha are veritable guidelines for subsequent scholars to follow.

It is fairly obvious that a comprehensive study of Buddhist iconography will demand not only both the descriptive and historical approaches, but also a good co-ordination of the two. Mallmann's works, mentioned above, although relate to the iconography of only two Bodhisattvas—Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī, can serve as the model. It is necessary that a comprehensive study of the iconography of some other Buddhist gods and goddesses is undertaken in the lines of Mallmann, so that all such studies, taken together, can help the future scholars write an authentic history of 'the development of Buddhist iconography'.

II

A. Foucher and, after him, B. Bhattacharyya made a comprehensive study of the iconography of the Buddhist pantheon.⁹ Later, Conze made an elaborate study of the iconography of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā,¹⁰ Mallmann studied that of the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī,¹¹ and Lohuizen-De Leeuw the iconography of the goddess Cundā.¹² All of them based their studies on the descriptions of deities found from the *Sādhnamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, sometimes using the materials from either of the two works and sometimes from both of them.¹³ This observation, of course, relates to the studies on Indian Buddhist iconography, and not to those which pertain to Tibetan or Chinese Buddhist iconography.¹⁴ However, it has to be noted that the information available from the two above-mentioned

source texts fails to explain the iconography of many Buddhist deities represented in various Indian sculptures and manuscript illustrations. Significantly enough, the study of a few Buddhist ritualistic texts, still in manuscript form, has led to satisfactory explanation of a number of such enigmas as well as to corrections of the previous identifications. Because of this, it is felt that for a comprehensive study of Buddhist iconography a thorough exploration of these ritualistic texts, together with a critical assortment of the extracts giving iconographic information, is a desideratum. Many such manuscripts are to be found in various public and private collections, both Indian and abroad.

The *Sādhnamālā* is a compilation of 312 *sādhana*s composed by various authors from time to time. The earliest manuscript of the *Sādhnamālā*, so far known, is dated in the Newari era 285, corresponding to A.D. 1165. Naturally, this work cannot be expected to record the developments that took place in Buddhist iconography after A.D. 1165. Similar is the case with the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, which, being a work of Abhayākara Gupta who lived during the reign of the Pāla king Rāmapāla (A.D. 1084-1130), can at best reflect the picture of things as late as A.D. 1130, and not of the situation beyond that. In other words, the *Sādhnamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* contain a fair collection of the iconographic prescriptions available till the twelfth century A.D. Moreover, the *Sādhnamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* are not the only texts dealing with the iconography of Buddhist deities. Presumably there were many other contemporary, earlier or later works on similar lines, but not necessarily containing the same iconographic prescriptions. Many of them, surprisingly, gave altogether different versions of the iconography of even the same deities discussed by the two works mentioned above. Sometimes, deities not known either to the *Sādhnamālā* or the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, find mention, together with their iconographic specifications, in many such texts.¹⁵

All these new materials, and also the multiplicity of the iconography of Buddhist gods and goddesses, could be the logical outcome of various factors. Some of these, obviously, are the results of later developments in iconographic concepts. Of the various factors responsible for such developments, the important one was the emergence of a number of sub-sects having ideological differences reflected in their respective iconographic injunction.¹⁶ Apart from this, in the wake of the expansion of the Buddhist pantheon, almost each of the gods and goddesses was assigned a number of iconic forms to serve as the visual replicas of their respective functions.¹⁷ Moreover, the divinities were assigned their specific positions in the *maṇḍala*, and the iconography of each deity was rationalized with that of the other associate-companions (*sahacārī*) in the *maṇḍala*. Consequently, the iconography of the same deity often differed : while represented singly or shown along with others, outside or inside a *maṇḍala*.¹⁸ Another factor that contributed towards the origin of different versions of the iconography of the same deity was perhaps the personal preferences of the authors of the *sādhana*s¹⁹ or of the devotees,²⁰ originating mostly out of regional predilection²¹ or of the social background²² of the persons responsible for introducing new features in iconography.

Whatever the reasons for the variety of forms of the same deity in Buddhist

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iconography, it is interesting to note that there are different categories of texts containing iconographic prescriptions, and quite appositely, the iconographic formulations given in one category of texts often differ from the same found in another. Of the various categories of such texts, the following ones, although not always mutually exclusive to each other, are the most notable; this is not necessarily because they contain the most authoritative information, but in view of the fact that they are frequently to be found in the mass of literature dealing with iconographic injunctions pertaining to the Buddhist pantheon. The categories are : (i) texts having the titles like *Sādhana-mālā*, *Sādhanasamuccaya*, *Sādhana-saṁgraha*, *Dharmakoṣa-saṁgraha*, etc., which are in the nature of a compendium of the descriptions of various deities; (ii) collections of a number of mystic formulae, e.g., *Dhāraṇī-saṁgraha*, *Dhāraṇī-mantramālā*, etc., in which the description, sometimes very brief, of the deity relevant to the particular *dhāraṇī* (mystic formula) is mostly given; (iii) treatises like *Niṣpan-nayogāvalī* or *Vajrāvalīnāma-maṇḍalopāyikā*, dealing with the exposition of the formulations of various *maṇḍalas* (ritual diagrams) together with the prescriptions for the iconography of the deities residing within them; (iv) various tantras, e.g., *Kāla-cakra-tantra*, *Kṛṣṇayamāri-tantra*, *Hevajra-tantra*, which, although are basically concerned with the magico-philosophic aspects of devotion, are a good repository of the descriptions of a number of iconographic forms of the same deity as visualized in different contexts; (v) several treatises on Buddhist rituals, as for instance, *Kriyā-saṁgraha-pañjikā*, *Pūjavidhi* or *Pujāpaddhati*, etc., containing good deal of information pertaining not only to the iconographic characteristics of various gods and goddesses, but also to elements of iconographic technicalities; (vi) *Pañcarakṣāsūtra*, *Vasudhārā-sūtra*, etc., which are in the nature of ritual stories (like the *Vrata-kathās*) connected with a single or a group of divinity, and they often contain the iconographic description of the deities concerned.

A huge mass of such textual materials dealing with various aspects of Buddhist worship, and as such giving information about the *rūpa* (form) and *lakṣaṇa* (lineament) of the icons, is still lying unexplored in the manuscript form in various public and private collections, both Indian and foreign. Similarly, numerous Buddhist images have not yet been properly identified, and as such the visual meanings of their concepts have remained unexposed, due to the non-availability of the prescriptive corroboration from literary documents. In view of this, we need, on the one hand, a thorough exploration of the materials available from the texts still lying in manuscript form, and on the other, a coordination between these materials and the Buddhist images represented in art. This will lead to the satisfactory identification of many such images which have not yet been properly identified, and also to many aspects of Buddhist iconography not yet properly appreciated.

Instances can be multiplied to show how this is possible. Some work has already been carried out by various scholars in this direction. But what remains to be done is much more than what has been accomplished. The present work is intended to emphasize the importance of undertaking more of such works, and to contribute its mite towards the enrichment of this particular field of study.

III

In the collection of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there is a manuscript (No. G.10741) of the *Paramārthanāmasaṅgīti* which contains a miniature painting depicting a Buddhist deity, red in colour, seated in the *Vajrāsana* on a lotus, and possessing twelve hands disposed in various *mudrās* and holding some attributes. This image (Plate 1) was mistakenly indentified by Mm. H.P. Shastri as a form of Mañjuśrī.²³ This was obviously due to his wrong enumeration of the number of the hands of the deity represented in the painting. Many such representations of this particular iconic type are also known from various other sources.²⁴ All of them have agreement on almost all the major points of iconography. Presumably, they represent a particular form of a deity. But there is no textual corroboration for the proper indentification of the deity available with either the *Sādhanamālā* or the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. In a comparatively later work — the *Dharmakośa-saṁgraha* of Amṛtānanda—there is the description of a deity called Nāmasaṅgīti²⁵ which tallies with the iconography of the god represented in the above-mentioned miniature painting. On the basis of this textual information, we are able to identify the deity represented in the miniature painting and similar other iconic forms found in the plastic arts,²⁶ referred to above. We are also informed of the fact that in the later Buddhist pantheon, a new god named Nāmasaṅgīti, who was different from the Nāmasaṅgīti form of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, both in concept and iconography, was incorporated.²⁷

A four-armed image of a goddess, preserved in the Nālandā Museum (Plate 2), was identified by Debala Mitra as the representation of the Buddhist goddess Mahāmāyūrī. But she could not be sure of the suggestion because of the non-availability, at that time, of any textual corroboration for this.²⁸ But it is interesting to note that, although the four-armed form of the goddess Mahāmāyūrī is not described either in the *Sādhanamālā* or the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* and although this form of the goddess is rarely to be found in art, the textual support for the identification suggested by Debala Mitra can be gleaned from the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscripts,²⁹ some of which are dated earlier than the earliest known date of the *Sādhanamālā*. As has already been discussed above, of the various manuscripts on which the well-known edition of the *Sādhanamālā* is based, the earliest bears a date corresponding to A.D. 1165. The date of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* cannot be later than the middle of the twelfth century, because the author of this work flourished during the reign period of Rāmapāla of the Pāla dynasty. But of the several early manuscripts of the *Pañcarakṣā* containing the description of the four-armed form of Mahāmāyūrī, mention could be made of the Cambridge University Library manuscript No. Add. 1688, copied, according to the colophon, in the fourteenth year the reign of Nayapāla of the Pāla dynasty.³⁰ Another such early manuscript giving the same information about the iconography of Mahāmāyūrī is the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript No. T. 1055 of the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta which was copied in the Newari era 225 (A.D. 1105) during the reign of Śihadeva, king of Nepal.³¹ This shows that many iconographic formulations are contained in texts which might be even of earlier composition than the *Sādhanamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* wherein such prescriptions have not been

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incorporated.

Another such case is that of the six-handed form of Vasudhārā. This form is not referred to in the two celebrated published texts on Buddhist iconography, although the same is represented together with an identificatory inscription,³² in the Cambridge University Library manuscript (No. Add. 1643) of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, dated in the Newari era 135 (A.D. 1015) (Plate 3). A similar form is represented in another manuscript of the same work, preserved in the collection of the Asiatic Society,³³ Calcutta. In fact, numerous other examples of representation of this particular form of the goddess are known from art. While Bhattacharyya kept mysterious silence over the absence of any textual prescription for the six-handed form of Vasudhārā,³⁴ B. N. Mukhopadhyaya discussed the issue at length. He pointed out that in the *Vasundharoddeśa* and in the *Vasundharāvratotpatya-vadāna*—two Buddhist ritualistic works—manuscripts of which are preserved in the collection of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there are descriptions of Vasudhārā with striking correspondence to the six-handed form of the goddess found in art representations.³⁵ A similar form of the goddess is described elsewhere also.³⁶

Representations of a Buddhist goddess are found in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* manuscript, dated A.D. 1028, now in the collection of Professor S. K. Saraswati³⁷ of Calcutta, and many such similar early manuscripts.³⁸ The same iconography of the goddess is also to be noticed in several stone and metal sculptures from Nepal and Tibet.³⁹ All such representations show the goddess in the *vajraparyāṅka* pose, and with four hands, the principal pair being in the *dharmacakra-mudrā* and the remaining right and left holding a rosary and a book respectively (Plate 4). It is surprising that neither in the *Sādhana-mālā* nor in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* there is any literary prescription for this iconographic form of the goddess, although representations of the same in art could be traced as far back as A.D. 1028, and for that matter presumably to a period even before the compilation of the two works just mentioned. In later literary texts, however, the prescriptive corroboration for such an iconic form is found, as for instance, in the *Dharmakośa-saṅgraha* of Amṛitānanda.⁴⁰

Instances of the availability of prescriptive support for many other iconic forms from texts of Buddhist rituals could be multiplied, but it is almost impossible to exhaust such references. The compilation of such textual accounts for the physical features of Buddhist icons is a desideratum for a comprehensive study of Buddhist iconography.⁴¹

IV

Another important aspect of the study of Buddhist iconography is to inquire into the origin and development of the concepts represented by various Buddhist deities and their respective iconographic formulations. Although some work in this direction has already been made, there remains much to be accomplished. The information available from several Buddhist ritualistic texts is of immense help in this

connection. This has not yet been fully utilized. The *Sādhana-mālā* and the *Niṣpanna-yogāvalī* also contain valuable relevant information. Moreover, as it has been rightly pointed out by Coomaraswamy long time back,⁴² there is hardly any conceptual element in Buddhist imagery that cannot be traced down from earlier sources. In fact, the concepts of several Buddhist divinities and even many of their iconographic formulations are to be found, sometimes in nascent form, in the art and thought of the other faiths. The followers of each of the faiths concerned can put forth a claim for the chronological priority of their respective conceptual or visual imageries, and the controversy is likely to be never-ending. However, it is necessary that all similarities and the elements of mutual dependence and borrowings traceable from the texts as well as objects of art belonging to the various faiths are brought out in order to appreciate the originality of all such ideas and images. It is also necessary to know the process of the transformation of all such elemental ingredients of the religious art of India through a series of socio-economic, and perhaps also political, exigencies.

For the understanding of the elemental features represented by the imagery in each of the iconic forms of the numerous Buddhist deities, a good knowledge of all the technicalities involved in the formation of each of these iconographic types is required. It has often been found that the lack of proper knowledge of iconographic terminologies has resulted in incorrect transliteration of iconographic injunctions into their visual representations, and due to a similar deficiency of knowledge, students of iconography have often made mistakes in the identification of images of gods and goddesses. Of particular importance, in this connection, are the meanings of various *mudrās* (hand-gestures), *āsanas* (sitting or standing stance),⁴³ and *āyudhas* (attributes in the hands)⁴⁴ of the deities. The difference between one iconic form and the other, even of the same deity, rests sometimes on a variation of a hand-gesture, sitting or standing posture, or on the presence or absence of an attribute in the hand. There is, therefore, the necessity of understanding properly the characteristics and implications of these elements of Buddhist iconography. Apart from the discussions on the interpretation of numerous such terminologies undertaken by technical texts like the *Abhidhānottara* or the *Kriyāsaṃgraha-pāñjikā*, useful information of the same nature is also to be found scattered throughout the *Sādhana-mālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. In the present work, it has been attempted to discuss a few points pertaining to this area of study.

V

It has already been stated earlier that the present work is concerned with that phase of Buddhist iconography when, under the banner of Vajrayāna-Tantrayāna Buddhism, there evolved a fairly well-defined pantheon. The idea of the Buddhist pantheon seems to have had assumed the fundamental structural fabric by the time the *Guhyasamāja-tantra* was composed. This work, which is considered to be a source-book of Buddhist pantheon, is claimed to have been composed as early as

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incorporated.

Another such case is that of the six-handed form of Vasudhārā. This form is not referred to in the two celebrated published texts on Buddhist iconography, although the same is represented together with an identificatory inscription,³² in the Cambridge University Library manuscript (No. Add. 1643) of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, dated in the Newari era 135 (A.D. 1015) (Plate 3). A similar form is represented in another manuscript of the same work, preserved in the collection of the Asiatic Society,³³ Calcutta. In fact, numerous other examples of representation of this particular form of the goddess are known from art. While Bhattacharyya kept mysterious silence over the absence of any textual prescription for the six-handed form of Vasudhārā,³⁴ B. N. Mukhopadhyaya discussed the issue at length. He pointed out that in the *Vasundharoddeśa* and in the *Vasundharāvratotpatya-vadāna*—two Buddhist ritualistic works—manuscripts of which are preserved in the collection of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there are descriptions of Vasudhārā with striking correspondence to the six-handed form of the goddess found in art representations.³⁵ A similar form of the goddess is described elsewhere also.³⁶

Representations of a Buddhist goddess are found in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* manuscript, dated A.D. 1028, now in the collection of Professor S. K. Saraswati³⁷ of Calcutta, and many such similar early manuscripts.³⁸ The same iconography of the goddess is also to be noticed in several stone and metal sculptures from Nepal and Tibet.³⁹ All such representations show the goddess in the *vajraparyāṅka* pose, and with four hands, the principal pair being in the *dharmacakra-mudrā* and the remaining right and left holding a rosary and a book respectively (Plate 4). It is surprising that neither in the *Sādhanamālā* nor in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* there is any literary prescription for this iconographic form of the goddess, although representations of the same in art could be traced as far back as A.D. 1028, and for that matter presumably to a period even before the compilation of the two works just mentioned. In later literary texts, however, the prescriptive corroboration for such an iconic form is found, as for instance, in the *Dharmakośa-saṅgraha* of Amṛitānanda.⁴⁰

Instances of the availability of prescriptive support for many other iconic forms from texts of Buddhist rituals could be multiplied, but it is almost impossible to exhaust such references. The compilation of such textual accounts for the physical features of Buddhist icons is a desideratum for a comprehensive study of Buddhist iconography.⁴¹

IV

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A.D. 300. But judged from the point of view of the history of art, it is difficult to maintain that the iconography of the Buddhist pantheon could have had been formulated that early. But there is not much of doubt that from about the eighth century onwards, Vajrayāna-Tantrayāna Buddhism played a very important role in the religious life of India, particularly Eastern India.⁴⁵ Our study starts from this period following which we notice an inordinate development of the Buddhist pantheon in the various centres of Vajrayāna-Tantrayāna Buddhism as reflected in the arts and also in the literature.

The important centres of Vajrayāna-Tantrayāna Buddhism in eastern India were Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Assam was another notable centre of t̃āntric belief and practices. But it has not yielded a large number of t̃āntric Buddhist images, although Kāmarūpa in Assam figures in Buddhist texts as one of the four major centres of t̃āntric Buddhism.⁴⁶ Together with the study of Buddhist iconography as found in these centres we have also studied the situation obtaining in Nepal. It is well-known that after the Muslim invasion many Buddhist monks fled from Bengal and Bihar and took shelter in Nepal in order to save themselves from the iconoclasts.⁴⁷ The monks migrating to Nepal obviously wanted to continue with their beliefs and practices, and evidently they got good support in this regard from the country of their adoption. Numerous Buddhist images and a large mass of Buddhist literature that Nepal has yielded stand testimony to this. From the study of these images and the literary texts, one can get an idea as to how Nepal not only preserved many of the earlier trends and traditions of Buddhist iconography, but also developed them to a great extent. Nepalese Buddhist iconography, therefore, not only throws informative light on many dark and obscure chapters of Indian Buddhist iconography, but also provides information regarding the nature of development that took place in Buddhist iconography after the twelfth century. Evidences for these later developments in Buddhist iconography could be found also from Tibet, China and Japan. Even when Buddhist iconography was flourishing in eastern India, Buddhism and its iconographic traditions, spread to South-East Asian countries like Java and Cambodia.⁴⁸ In some manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, there are the illustrations of Buddhist deities together with inscriptions giving identifications of the images and also some place names,⁴⁹ presumably referring to the places famous for those iconic forms. For the present study, all such centres connected with Buddhist iconographical lore have been taken into consideration in order to have a wider perspective of the materials and situations dealt with here.

In this work our emphasis has been on the study of the concept and iconography of Buddhist goddesses. This we have done in two ways : (i) by enquiring into the nature of the concept represented by the Supreme Buddhist goddess, Tārā and few of her manifestations, (ii) by studying the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā and of the Pañcarakṣā goddesses. There is not much special reason why these goddesses were selected for the study, except that there exists good scope for doing so. Conze's study of the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā is no doubt a scholarly one, but there is the necessity of undertaking a more comprehensive study in the light of the materials subsequently discovered. Bhattacharyya's study of the

iconography suffers from many unwarranted omissions and commissions. Moreover, useful new materials, both artistic and textual, pertaining to the study of the iconography of the Pañcarakṣā goddesses have come to light after Bhattacharyya's study. In the present work, therefore, an attempt has been made to coordinate all such materials and to properly collate them so that the outcome is a comprehensive study of the iconography of a few deities of Buddhism occupying predominant position in the pantheon.

NOTES

1. Cf. Asiatic Society Ms. No. B.35, fol.6B : *karuṇāt sarvasattānām lokanāthena bhāṣitā*; fol. 63B: *kṣurōdhārā samā vidyā gotamena (Gautamena) bhāṣitā*.
2. An interesting example is that of the concept of Surādevī, the wine-goddess, no doubt the deified concept of wine (*surā*). This goddess is mentioned, together with an elaborate description of the iconography of her eighteen-handed form in a *Pañcarakṣā* Ms., written, according to the colophon, during the reign period of Pratāpamalla of Nepal. See Ms. No. Ca. 887, preserved in the Archives of the Government of Nepal. The relevant description is given in fols. 90A-B, where the goddess is assigned various attributes in the hands, and is referred to as *kanyakākāmarūpiṇī* (the damsel of desire), *trailokyavaśaṁkarīṇī* (spellbinder of the three worlds), *nānārasadhārī* (bearer of various liquids or juice)—concepts very well-connected with the nature of wine or any other liquid intoxicant (*surā*). Quite appositely, the attributes in the hands of the goddess include a vessel full of wine (*surāpūrṇaghaṭa*).
3. Waddell, L.A., 'The Indian Buddhist Cult of Avalokita and his consort Tārā, the Saviouress, illustrated from the remains in Magadha', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, (1894) ; Sastri, Hiranand, 'The origin and the Cult of Tārā', *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. XX (1925)
4. Dhavalikar, M.K., 'The origin of Tārā', *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, Vol. XXIV (1963-64), pp. 15-20; D.C. Sircar, ed., *The Śakti Cult and Tārā*, Calcutta, 1967.
5. Conze, E., 'The Iconography of the Prajñāpāramitā', Parts I and II, *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, (1949), and Vol. III, No. 3, (1950).
6. de Mallmann, M.T., *Introduction a l'etude d'Avalokiteśvara*, Paris, 1948; *Etude Iconographique Sur Mañjuśrī*, Paris, 1964.
7. Foucher, A., *Etude sur l'Iconographie Bouddhique de l'Inde*, Part I, Paris, 1900, Part II, Paris, 1905; Bhattacharyya B., *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*, 1st ed., Oxford, 1924, 2nd. ed., Calcutta, 1958; Gordon, A.K., *The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism*, New York, 1966.
8. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *Elements of Buddhist Iconography*, Cambridge, Mass., 1935.
9. Foucher, op. cit.
Bhattacharyya, op. cit.
10. Conze, op. cit.
11. See de Mallmann's *d'Avalokiteśvara*, op. cit., and *Sur Mañjuśrī*, op. cit.
12. Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, J.E., 'The Paṭṭikerā Chundā and Variation of her image', *N.K. Bhattacharya Commemoration Volume*, Dacca, 1966.
13. See for instance, Conze, op. cit., where the author did not use the materials from the NSP, which contains a description of Prajñāpāramitā not found in the SM.
14. Tibetan and Chinese materials have been used by Gordon, op. cit., and by Getty, A., *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, 1962.
15. For example, Nāmasaṅgiti, Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī, Surādevī, etc.
16. In the ritual texts, we find quite frequently, expressions like *iti kālacakratantramate, evaṁvi-*

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- dhah sahajayāne*, or *iti matāntaradhyānam*, after the descriptions of deities. The implications of these expressions are quite obvious.
17. Deities have often been classified into categories like Kāmavajra (family of desire), Mohavajra (family of illusion), Dveṣavajra (family of hatred), etc., presided over by their respective Kuleśas (Dhyānī Buddhas).
 18. For example, the iconography of the Pañcarakṣā goddesses, while represented singly is different from that while included in a group in a *maṇḍala*.
 19. Many *sādhana*s of the *SM* have the names of their respective authors, and the iconography, even of the same deity, as given by one author is often quite different from that found in the composition of the other.
 20. In a manuscript (No. Ca. 332, fol. 22B), preserved in the Archives of the Govt. of Nepal, there is this significant expression : *sādhanaśamuccaye yathā dṛiṣṭam tadvadlikhitam api ca bhaktavilāse katicit padāni yuktāni āmnāntarād uddhṛitam*.
 21. In the manuscript *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, (No. Add. 1643 of the Cambridge Univ. library, and No. A. 15 of the Asiatic Society), there are the illustrations of various Buddhist deities together with their identificatory inscriptions. These inscriptions often refer to place names, obviously of the places where such forms of the deities were popular. As for example, some of the inscriptions read : *candradvīpe bhagavatī tārā, paṭṭikere vuṅkāra cundā, uddīyāna māricī*, etc.
 22. It is interesting to note that the goddesses, Paṇṣābarī and Māricī, for instance, have two distinct iconic forms : one, in which the tribal features of the goddess are predominant; and the other, in which the form is much more sophisticated. These two distinct qualities of the bearing of the iconography speak of two different social attitudes represented by them. The image-makers had no doubt to cater to the needs and preferences of various classes of people of the society. In the *Bṛiḥatsaṃhitā* (Ch. 57, v. 29), it has been stated that the images should possess the attributes, dress, and ornaments in accordance with the customs prevalent in the country. The Buddhist texts of later days have gone a step further and declared that images should be made following the family traditions of the devotees and of the image-makers originating from their respective desire and taste (*yathā mati sādhakasya yathā ca ruci sthāpakasya bhavanti | tadvatpratimādīni kāryāni sarve 'nusrataḥ kauladharmān*). See Ms. No. Tri. 590, fol. 22B, Archives of the Government of Nepal.
 23. Sastri, H.P., *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection under the care of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1917, p. 59. For a discussion on the illustration in question see *JAS*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, (1966), pp. 257 ff.
 24. One similar such image in clay is there in the collection of Professor S.K. Saraswati of Calcutta. See *JAS*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, (1966), Pl. I, Fig. 2; one image is illustrated by Bhattacharyya, see *IBI*, Fig. 151. Getty also illustrates one such image from Tibet, but she identifies it as the 'Dogmatic Form Of Avalokiteśvara'—see *GNB*, Pl. XX, and pp. 66ff.
 25. Bhattacharyya also quotes this, see *IBI*, p. 207, but unfortunately his quotation is not faithful to the original text. See for the criticism, *JAS*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, (1966), p. 260.
 26. See Bhattacharyya, D.C., 'Nāmasaṅgīti—A Rare Buddhist Icon', *JAS*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, (1966), pp. 257-60.
 27. *Ibid*.
 28. Mitra, D., 'Iconographic Notes', *JAS*, Vol. I, 1959, pp. 37ff.
 29. See Bhattacharyya, D.C., 'The Four-handed Image of Mahāmāyūrī', *JAS*, Vol. VI, No. 1, (1964), pp. 1ff, and also, by the same author, *Tāntric Buddhist Iconographic Sources*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 42, where the relevant passage has also been quoted. This passage, however, was later amended by the present author with the help of another Ms. of the *Pañcarakṣā*. For the reference, see the relevant portions of the chapter on the Pañcarakṣā goddesses, in the present work.
 30. For the colophon of the Ms., see Bendall, C., *Catalogue of Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts in the University Library*, Cambridge, 1883, p. 175.

31. For the date of this Ms., refer to Saraswati, S.K., 'Sihadeva, a forgotten king of Nepal', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Bombay, 1947, p. 252.
32. For reference, see Foucher, op. cit.
33. Ibid.
34. In discussing the iconography of Vasudhārā, Bhattacharyya refers to the three sets of literary descriptions of the goddess found from the *SM*, according to which, she should be represented with two hands. See *IBI*, pp. 202-3, 241-5; *SM*, Nos. 213-15. But none of the illustrations cited by Bhattacharyya tally with the literary descriptions. In two of these illustrations, the goddess is six-armed, see, for instance *IBI*, Figs. 187-8. Bhattacharyya has described them, but has not said anything regarding the lack of corroborative textual account. See *IBI*, p. 245.
35. Mukhopadhyaya, B.N., 'Vasudhārā', *Vasudhārā* (in Bengali), 4th year, Vol. I, No. 1, 1367 Bengali Samvat, pp. 21-6; Pal, P., *Two Buddhist Paintings from Nepal*, Amsterdam, 1967, pp. 18ff and Appendix II.
36. *DKS*, fols. 36B-37A.
37. Mukhopadhyaya, B.N., op. cit., p. 24.
38. See for instance, the Bodleian Library, Oxford Ms. No. Sansk. a7 (R), dated in the year 15 of Rāmapāla, or the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta Ms. No. T. 1055, dated in the Newari era 225 (A.D. 1105).
39. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 3, (1949), p. 50; *GNB*, p. 131.
40. See Bhattacharyya, D.C. 'An important form of Prajñāpāramitā', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Bhagalpur, 1968, p. 47; *TBIS.*, Ch. III, section C., 2nd to 5th quotations. The *DKS.* is dated in the Newari era 946 (A.D. 1826). It is interesting that the *DKS.* knows only this form of Prajñāpāramitā. It is not certain whether the paintings and sculptures depicting this iconic form of the goddess follow any earlier literary prescription which the *DKS.* might have preserved in it or whether the *DKS.* actually gives a literal transcript of this particular iconic form known to it from actual representations only.
41. Some such works have been already carried out. See, for instance, Bhattacharyya, D.C., 'The Navagrahas in Buddhist Iconography', *Bulletin of the School of Historical and Cultural Studies*, Calcutta, Vol. II, No. 1, 1967; Pal, P. and Bhattacharyya, D.C., *The Astral Divinities of Nepal*, Varanasi, 1969; *TBIS.*
42. Coomaraswamy, op. cit. This is the major point of discussion throughout the book.
43. In Buddhist iconography, the word 'āsana' is often used in connection with the standing postures as well. See, for instance, the expression 'pratyāliḍhāsana' in *SM*. No. 136, is used for 'pratyāliḍhapada', while describing the form of Mārīcī.
44. The word 'āyudha' in Buddhist iconographic texts, does not always mean a weapon. It is also often used in the sense of an attribute or a sign. Cf. *Padmāyudha yadi savye sā devī puṣṭidā bhavet*, fol. 37B, Ms. No. Ca. 936 of the Archives of the Govt. of Nepal.
45. Conze, E., *Buddhism Its Essence And Development*, 2nd ed., London, 1952, pp. 178ff.
46. Snellgrove, D.L., ed., *Hevajra-Tantra*, London, 1959, Part I, Ch. VII, v. 12.
47. Altekar, A.S., ed., *Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, translated by C. Roerich, Patna, 1959, p. ii.
48. Sircar, D.C., ed., *The Śakti Cult And Tārā*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 123.
49. Foucher, op. cit. Appendices I & II.

TWO

The Goddess Tārā

I

Tārā is the supreme Buddhist goddess. She has numerous manifestations, each of them having a name, and many of them provided with an iconic form in accordance with the exigency. The *Sādhanamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* contain much details about many such forms of the goddess. But they do not refer to her Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī form, which, however, finds good coverage in several other Buddhist ritualistic works, mostly of later composition than the two works mentioned above. The study of this form of the goddess Tārā is of interest, because it throws informative light on the nature of creativity of the Buddhist iconographers during the period when they seem to have engaged themselves to the formulation, as if, of an all-inclusive pantheon for their community.

From the accounts of the *Nārāyaṇaparṣicchā* and the *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha*,¹ it appears that Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī is the Buddhist goddess of war. She is described as venerable and worshipful not only to the gods and the divine mothers (*sarvadeva namaskṛite mātṛigaṇapūjite vandite svāhā*), but also to Vajradhara himself (*vajradharavandite pūjite svāhā*) who is the Ādi-Buddha or the originator of the five Dhyānī Buddhas, the progenitors of the five *kulas* or families of Buddhist gods and goddesses. Her epithet, *sarvāvaraṇakṣayaṃkarī*, reminds us of the same, *sarvāvaraṇavināśinī*, given to Prasanna-Tārā in the *Sādhanamālā*.² That the goddess is referred to, in the *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha* account, as *padmapāṇipriye* (the beloved of Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara) is also significant.

From the above, it appears that Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī is the same as the goddess Tārā. The former is described as possessing thousand heads and arms—a form also ascribed often to the goddess Tārā. Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī, presumably, is the Supreme Form (*virāḍrūpa*) of the goddess Tārā, in which she imparts success

in wars and struggles, similar to the Durgā and Caṇḍī aspects of the Brāhmaṇical Devī.

In this connection reference should be made to the interesting similarities existing between the Brāhmaṇical concept of Caṇḍī or Devī and the Buddhist concept of Tārā in general, and the Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī aspect of the goddess in particular. In the Devīmāhātmya section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*, we find that the presiding deities for the first, second (middle) and the last parts (*carita*) are Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī, and Mahāsarasvatī respectively. It is interesting to note that the Buddhist goddess Tārā has also these three principal aspects known respectively as Ugratārā or Mahācīnākramatārā, Vasudhārā, and Prajñāpāramitā. The aforesaid section of the same Purāṇa characterises the Devī as the great saviour who, being prayed to, delivers men from such perils as captivity, wilderness, harassment by robbers, great forests, fire, cyclone, wild animals like tiger, lion, elephant, etc.³ It is interesting to note that the Buddhist goddess Tārā is also assigned this characteristic in her Aṣṭamahābhaya aspect, as has been pointed out by J. N. Banerjea.⁴ In a more elaborate discussion,⁵ Debala Mitra states that, in her Aṣṭamahābhaya aspect, the goddess Tārā is invoked specially for the deliverance from the 'Eight Great Perils' (aṣṭamahābhayas) like shipwreck, conflagration, enraged elephant, brigand, pouncing lion, serpent, prison and demon, as has been enumerated in the *Sragdharāstotra* composed by Sarvajñamitra (c. 8th century A.D.). Moreover, the last couplet of the *Nārāyaṇīstuti* (Ch. 91) of the Devīmāhātmya section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa* has it that the goddess will often incarnate herself to kill the enemies of the gods, as and when the Dānavas will cause obstacles and distress to them. J.N. Banerjea rightly observes that this 'distinctly reminds us of the ideology behind the divine incarnation (*avatāravāda*) explained in the first few verses of the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*'.⁶ It is interesting to note that the Buddhists also assigned to the goddess Tārā an almost similar concept, as is evident from the *Dhārāṇī-Saṃgraha* in which it has been claimed that the goddess Tārā appears as the saviour of the world whenever the people are in distress caused by the Yakṣas and Rākṣasas.⁷

The Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī aspect of the goddess Tārā also represents some parallel characteristics of the Brāhmaṇical Devī. The Devīmāhātmya section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa* characterises the Devī essentially as a war-goddess and represents her as fighting with and destroying the enemies of the gods, who invoked the goddess with befitting prayers (*evameva ivayā kāryamasmaadvairi vināśanam*).⁸ In her Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī aspect, the goddess Tārā has also been conceived likewise as a war-goddess destroying the forces of the enemies (*parasainyavidrāpanī*).⁹ The goddess Caṇḍī in her Kālī aspect is described as devouring the forces of the Asuras (*surāriṇām abhakṣayata tadbalam*),¹⁰ and again in her Cāmuṇḍā form, she is described as such (*mukhe sumudgato yo'syā raktapātān mahāsurāḥ tāmśca khādātha cāmuṇḍā papau tasya ca śoṇitam*).¹¹ It is interesting to note that the Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī aspect of the goddess Tārā is also described likewise as devouring the forces of the enemies (*parasainyagrasantamiya cintayet*).¹²

In her Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī form, the goddess Tārā is conceived as having

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thousand heads and arms. A parallel concept of the Devī was also recognised in the Brāhmaṇical pantheon.¹³ In the context of the description of the *virāḍrūpa* (great form) of the Devī, the *Devigītā*¹⁴ refers to such a form. It should, however, be mentioned in this connection that the Vaikṛitikarahasya section of the *Caṇḍī* clearly states that the Devī should be worshipped in her eighteen-handed form, in spite of her having thousand hands (*aṣṭādaśabhujā pūjyā sā sāhasrabhujā satī*). In the *Caṇḍī* as also in some other texts, we also find the description of several other forms of the Devī with hands numbering even less than eighteen. Thus it seems that the Brāhmaṇists conceived of one *virāḍrūpa* and several *saṃkṣiptarūpas* (condensed forms) of the Devī. It is significant that the Buddhists also conceived of a *virāḍrūpa* of the goddess Tārā with thousand heads and arms, as manifested in her Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī aspect, and several other condensed forms of the goddess with variations in the number of her heads and arms,¹⁵ and appositely, in the attributes.

Regarding the representation in art of the Mahāmāyāvijayavāhinī form of the goddess Tārā, it is to be mentioned that this image-type of the goddess, though very rare, is not totally unknown. Alice Getty informs us that in the collection of Tibetan temple pictures belonging to M. Bacot, there is a painting of Tārā with 'one thousand heads and arms'. The heads are arranged in two rows on either side of the central row, superposed one above the other *ad infinitum*, and the five rows are painted green, red, white, yellow and blue. She is represented standing.¹⁶ Gorden also describes and illustrates a standing image of Uṣṇīṣasitāpatrāparājītā, a form of Tārā, with 'a thousand heads and thousand arms'.¹⁷ Both these images have been, however, found from Tibet. But as the Nepalese Buddhist manuscripts, referred to above, describe this magnificent iconic form of the goddess Tārā, and as Tibetan Buddhist iconography is basically derived from Nepal, it is quite likely that this iconic form of the goddess Tārā was also known in Nepal and in the various centres of Buddhist worship in Eastern India:

II

More investigation would show that for many other, if not all, concepts of the goddess Tārā there is always a Brāhmaṇical parallel. In the Devīmāhātmya section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*, the goddess Durgā or Caṇḍī is characterised as the Supreme Female Energy (*śakti*). To the Buddhists, the goddess Tārā occupies that supreme position. It is well-known that Durgā and Tārā share various concepts. For each of their underlying concepts, both Durgā and Tārā assume a particular name which is often nothing but a verbal abstraction of the iconography of the deity. It is interesting to find that between Durgā and Tārā, there are similarities not only in respect of certain concepts but also with regard to the names, and as such, often of the iconography corresponding to these concepts.

The name Śabarī, and even Parṇaśabarī, is found among the numerous names of Durgā.¹⁸ Parṇaśabarī is also the name of a form of the Buddhist goddess Tārā.¹⁹ Parṇaśabarī means a Śabara woman clad in tree leaves or *parṇa*. In the Buddhist

literature there is no legend which explains why the goddess Tārā was conceived as a Śābara woman clad in leaves. In the Purāṇas, however, there is the story how Pārvatī or Durgā had to assume the form of a youthful Śābara woman in order to entice lord Śiva out of his unswerving celibacy.²⁰ It was obviously an eulogy, by the composers of the Purāṇas, of the alluring voluptuousness of the tribal beauty of the female form, only which, according to them, could disturb the steadfast mind even of lord Śiva. But why out of all tribal beauties the reference, and presumably also the preference, here is to the charmingness of a Śābara woman cannot be ascertained. In the Āryāstava section of the *Harivaṃśa*, it is stated that the goddess Durgā or Caṇḍī was well-worshipped by the Śābaras, Barbaras, and the Pulindas (*śābarair-barbaraiścaiva pulidaiśca supūjitā*).²¹ Bāṇabhaṭṭa in his *Kādambarī* also refers to the goddess Durgā or Caṇḍī being worshipped by the Śābaras.²²

These references to the worship of the goddess Durgā or Caṇḍī by the Śābaras, however, do not throw any light on the actual iconographic form in which the goddess was worshipped. It is found that people often make the images of gods and goddesses in their own image. And so, some characteristics, racial or other, of the makers or patrons of the images can be traced in them. In fact, in the *Bṛihatsaṃhitā* it is enjoined that the images of divinities should have the dress, ornaments, and outward form of the men of the country for which the images are to be made (*deśānurūpa bhūṣaṇaveśālakāra mūrtibhiḥ kāryyā*).²³ It is hence not unlikely that while making the images of the goddess Durgā or Caṇḍī, the Śābaras might have incorporated into the images, some of their own characteristics in respect at least of dress and ornaments. The most cognizable characteristic feature of the Śābaras is that they are usually clad in leaves (*śābarāḥ patraparidhānāḥ*), as mentioned in the *Amarakoṣa*.²⁴ Hence it is quite likely that the Śābaras, while making the images of the goddess Durgā or Caṇḍī for their own worship, would represent the goddess as wearing the leaves in conformity with their own racial characteristic. In course of time this special form of the goddess might have been known as Parṇaśabarī for its exclusive connection with the Śābaras and for its garment of leaves (*parṇa*). The form of the goddess Durgā or Caṇḍī worshipped by the Śābaras is referred to by Vākpatirāja (c. 8th century A.D.) in his *Gauḍavaho*²⁵ as Parṇaśabarī.

It appears that the devotion of the Śābaras towards the goddess Durgā might have at one time been appreciated even by the orthodox Brahmanists, and it was probably this very appreciation which led the *Śāstrakāras* (Law-makers) to include a special ceremony, namely the *Śābarotsava* (the ceremony of the Śābaras) in the paraphernalia of *Durgā-Pūjā* (worship of the goddess Durgā). The *Śābarotsava*, though obsolete these days, was essentially to be performed in ancient times on the concluding day (*Vijayā-Ḍaśamī*) of *Durgā Pūjā*. The celebrated *Smṛitakāras* (writers of *Smṛiti* texts) like Jīmūtavāhana, Śūlapāṇi, Śrīnātha, Raghunandana, and others, in their presentations and injunctions regarding the various essential rites and rituals connected with *Durgā-pūjā* ceremony recommend the performance of the *Śābarotsava* during the immersion of the image of the goddess Durgā into water.²⁶ The *Śābarotsava* has been defined by Jīmūtavāhana as the auspicious ceremony performed on the concluding day of *Durgā-pūjā*, in which the people clothe themselves

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like the Śābaras with leaves, besmear their body with mud, and indulge in sporadic dance, play, music, fun and frolic to the extent that the free exchange of slangs and even the act of intercourse in public become sanctified by the grace of the goddess Durgā.²⁷ It is not unlikely that these obnoxious rites prescribed for the *Śābarotsava* were originally performed by the Śābaras during their worship of the Parṇaśabarī form of Durgā. Thus the inclusion of the *Śābarotsava* in the paraphernalia of *Durgā-pūjā* seems to have been an indirect recognition of the worship of the Parṇaśabarī form of Durgā, at least in spirit, if not in the iconographic form as well. The description of the goddess Durgā, while assuming the form of a Śābara woman, as found from the *Skanda-Purāṇa* is of some interest in this connection. There she is described as a beautiful woman having her body besmeared with mud, showing the peacock's feather decoration on the hair, and holding the bow in the hand and the quiver at the back.²⁸ The description reminds us of a tribal hunteress, what a Śābari woman actually is, and also of some aspects of the rituals of the *Śābarotsava*,²⁹ and finally, of the Parṇaśabarī form of the Buddhist goddess Tārā.³⁰

Now the question may be asked how and why did the Buddhists also conceive of a Parṇaśabarī form for their supreme goddess, Tārā? It is well-known that the Buddhists are indebted to their Brāhmaṇical brethren for the concepts, and even for the iconography, of many of their gods and goddesses.³¹ They even had incorporated many of the Brāhmaṇical deities as such into their pantheon.³² The Vajrayāna Buddhists extracted all possible iconic concepts from any explorable source, and incorporated them into their own pantheon so that it looked attractive, and therefore, was accepted by a maximum number of people. It was quite natural that their attention would also fall on the Parṇaśabarī form of Durgā. They were not drawn towards it only by its fascinating form. The Parṇaśabarī form of Durgā was popular with the aboriginal peoples like the Śābaras, Barbaras, Pulindas, Kirātas, and similar other categories of people who were regarded as outcastes by the orthodox Brāhmaṇists. The recognition of the goddess-concept popular with the underdogs of the society as the Parṇaśabarī form of Tārā, the supreme goddess of Buddhism, presumably served as a bait to draw a large number of people from the much-neglected section of the society towards Vajrayāna and Tantrayāna forms of Buddhist worship. Interestingly, in later Buddhist literature, some of the Graha deities are referred to as Caṇḍālas, Pāśupatas, and Kāpālikas—people who were despised by the Brāhmaṇical society—evidently to broaden the structure of the society of the followers of tāntric Buddhism. But there the motive was not just to attract the despised people to join the fold of tāntric Buddhism, but to give them a sense of belonging to the society so that they do not lose faith in the society and fall a victim to the dubious allurements of the contemporary socio-political situation.³³

Another interesting point should also be mentioned in this context. The *Tantrasāra* refers to the leaf-clothed form of the goddess Durgā not as Parṇaśabarī, but as Kaiṛātī, i.e., Parṇakairātī.³⁴ This might show that the leaf-clothed form of the goddess Durgā was popular with the Kirātas as well, who were a non-Aryan tribe living in the mountainous regions of north and north-eastern India, and who were

distinguished from the Śābaras.³⁵ It is significant that the Buddhists did not take the name Parṇakairātī for a form of Tārā, but they preferred the name Parṇaśabarī — evidently to give more importance to the Śābaras than to the Kirātas. The possible reason for this is not far to seek. Among the eighty-four Vajrayāna Buddhist *Siddhas* (those who attained the perfection) there was one Śābaripa or Śābarapāda (known also as Śābarī, Śābarīśvara or Śābareśvara), who, according to the *Pang-Sam-Jon-Zan*, belonged to the hill tribe called the Śābaras.³⁶ Moreover, Śāraha, one of the chief promulgators of tāntric doctrines and practices, and a celebrated author of Buddhist *dohās*, was also a Śābara.³⁷ Thus it seems that the Śābaras did take active part in tāntric Buddhist activities. Moreover, some of them even attained exalted position by virtue of their devotion and sincere participation in tāntric practices. This presumably earned for the Śābaras, from among the other tribes, a place of distinction in recognition of which the leaf-clothed form of the Buddhist goddess Tārā was nomenclated as Parṇaśabarī in preference to Parṇakairātī, the other possible name.

It is, however, to be mentioned in this connection that in the *Skanda-Purāṇa*, the Śābarī form of the goddess Durgā is not characterised as wearing a leaf-garment, but her special attribute is stated to be the peacock's feathers.³⁸ Similarly, the Kairātī-form of the Devī is also described as having peacock-feather as an attribute, but, in addition, she is also referred to there as possessing the leaf-garment.³⁹ The *Car-yāgīti* account is very close to that of the *Skanda-Purāṇa*, since the goddess Śābarī is referred to there as wearing the feathers of a cock (*moraṅgī piccha parahīṇa śābarī*).⁴⁰ In the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, reference is made to the iconography of Śābarī twice,⁴¹ and to that of Parṇaśabarī once.⁴² In the first two cases, the goddess is associated neither with tree-leaf nor with cock-feather, but it is only in the third case, that the goddess is described as holding the peacock's feather (*mayūrapicchadharā*). The *Sādhanamālā* describes the Parṇaśabarī form of Tārā thrice (*sādhana* Nos. 148-150). In *Sādhana* No. 148, she is described both as wearing tree-leaves (*parṇapicchikāvasanām*), and as holding tree-leaf (*parṇapicchikā*) as an attribute. In *Sādhana* No. 149 tiger-skin (*vyāghracarma*) is mentioned as the garment of the goddess, but, at the same time, there is also the mention of tree-leaf (*patracchāṭā*) as an attribute. From all these it appears that, to start with, tree-leaf did not figure in the iconography of Parṇaśabarī; it was introduced later either as a substitute for or together with the original attribute, namely, the cock or peacock-feather. In the expression like *parṇapicchikāvasanām*, as found in the *sādhana* No. 148 of the *Sādhanamālā* describing the iconography of Parṇaśabarī, there is possibly an indication that the garment (*vasana*) of the goddess should be both of leaf (*parṇa*) and of feathers (*picchikā*). Such a formulation could be indicative of a phase of transition. It is to be mentioned in this connection that the word *parṇa* means a leaf as well as a feather. The change of the goddess's garment from feather to leaf did not, therefore, necessitate a consequent change in the name of the goddess Parṇaśabarī.

Reference should be made in this connection to some very interesting representations of the goddess Parṇaśabarī in art. In some of them, the goddess is depicted in the *pratyālīḍha* attitude as given in the *sādhana*s.⁴³ But in some other

cases, she is shown in the peculiar stance technically known as *jānuparyāṅkāsaṇa* (an attitude in which one of the knees touches the ground). This particular pose of the goddess (Plate 5) reminds us of the dance performed by the Śabarās during their worship of the Parṇasābarī form of Durgā, and of the similar popular rites performed during the celebration of the *Śābarotsava* part of *Durgā-pūjā*. It is not unlikely that even when the Buddhists took up Parṇasābarī into their pantheon, they continued with the performance of some earlier rites and rituals connected with the worship of the goddess in her original tribal status, and the same is reflected in the image type of the goddess referred to above. It is no doubt significant that in the *Ekallavīra-caṇḍa-mahāroṣaṇa-tantra*, there is the prescription that the goddess Parṇasābarī should be offered roasted fish, etc., (*dagdhamatsyādi*)⁴⁴ during her worship. The offering of roasted fish and meat is a veritable characteristic of almost all forms of tribal worship. The offering of fish (*matsya*) to the goddess is also interesting because *matsya* is one of the items of tāntric *pañca-makāras*.⁴⁵ But it should be noted that roasted fish has more of a tribal association. The incorporation, or rather the survival, of such characteristic tribal feature in the Buddhist mode of worship of the goddess Parṇasābarī probably speaks of the tribal antecedent of the concept of the goddess.

III

The concept of Mārīcī, another manifestation of the goddess Tārā, is also an interesting topic for study. Mārīcī is the Buddhist counterpart of the Brāhmaṇical god Sūrya. It is interesting that Mārīcī is a goddess, whereas Sūrya, known also as Mārīcimālī in the Brāhmaṇical tradition,⁴⁶ is a god. Moreover, Sūrya is usually conceived as riding on a chariot drawn by horses, usually seven in number, but the chariot of Mārīcī is drawn by seven pigs. But in spite of these variations, there is little doubt that the concept, and even the iconography, of Mārīcī are derived from those of Sūrya. It has, of course, to be admitted that two basic conspicuities, namely, her femininity and association with the pigs, make Mārīcī iconographically different from her Brāhmaṇical counterpart, Sūrya. But in spite of these, the solar character of Mārīcī remains unaltered.

In Greek mythology, Selene, the Moon, is a goddess.⁴⁷ In the Indian tradition, the Sun is invariably a god, although the solar concept of the Devī or Śakti (the Supreme Female Principle) was also known to it, as will be discussed later. In fact, on a deeper analysis, it appears that the concept of Mārīcī also represents the solar aspect of the Devī or Śakti, and that it might have originated out of the ideology of syncretism between the cults of the Śāktas and of the Sauras.

We know that the concept of Ardhanārīśvara represents the idea of syncretism between the Śaiva and Śākta cults, and that the concept of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, described in the *Śilparatna* and *Tantrasāra* and known variously as Ardhalakṣmīhari, and Vāsudeva-Kamalaajā in the *Śāradātilaka-Tantra* and in the Nepalese *taṅkāś* respectively, represents the syncretism between Vaiṣṇavism and Śāktism.⁴⁸ It is interesting that the *Śilparatna* describes another such composite image-type, Śaktigaṇapati, in which

the syncretism between the cults of the Śāktas and the Gāṇapatyas is involved. As the iconography of Śāktigaṇapati has been described in the *Śilparatna*⁴⁹ under the heading of *Miśramūrttayaḥ* (i.e., the composite images) and along with several other well-known syncretistic image-types, e.g., Ardhanārīśvara, Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, Harihara, etc., the composite and syncretistic nature of the concept of Śāktigaṇapati is quite evident. From the name itself, Śāktigaṇapati seems to be an image-concept in which syncretism between the cults of the Śāktas and the Gāṇapatyas is involved. Usually, however, in a syncretistic image-concept, involving the Śākta and a non-Śākta cult (e.g., Ardhanārīśvara, or Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa), the left half of the image is described as female and the right half of male. But it is interesting that Śāktigaṇapati is described as having the body from the neck upwards with elephant features (*kaṇṭhādūr-dhaṇi karindram*), and the portion of the body from neck downwards like that of a youthful lady (*yuvatīmāyamadhastalam*).⁵⁰ Thus it seems that Śāktigaṇapati is, in fact, the Gaṇapati aspect of the Devī or Śākti.

Example of another such interesting image-type is to be found in the description of Saurī-Caturakṣarī, the solar aspect of the Devī or Śākti, as given in the *Śilparatna*.⁵¹ It is significant that there, the goddess Saurī-Caturakṣarī is not only assigned all sorts of solar characteristics like brilliance, radiance, astral features, etc., but she is also invoked as mother Arka (i.e., Sūrya) having elevated breasts (*tuṅgastanamavatu jagannāturarkaṇi vapurvah*). Thus it is clear that Saurī-Caturakṣarī represents the solar concept of the Devi, and it is possible that this concept originated out of an ideology of syncretism between the cults of the Śāktas and of the Sauras.

We have seen that the Buddhist goddess Mārīcī also has the solar and astral characteristics in a female form. Thus there is striking conceptual similarity between Saurī-Caturakṣarī of the *Śilparatna* and the Buddhist goddess Mārīcī. At Khiching in the Mayurbhanja state, the Buddhist goddess Mārīcī is known as Caṇḍi-Ṭhākuraṇī, and at Ayodhya and Sujangarh in the Nilgiri states, she is known respectively as Mārīcī-Ṭhākuraṇī and Budhār-Caṇḍī (Buddhist Caṇḍī).⁵² This is undoubtedly very significant. Saurī-Caturakṣarī, as we have already seen, is a form of the Supreme Brāhmaṇical goddess Devī or Caṇḍī; Mārīcī, likewise, is a form of Tārā, the Supreme Buddhist goddess. Moreover, we know that many of the concepts of Tārā are derived from those of the Supreme Brāhmaṇical goddess Devī or Caṇḍī. Thus it appears that the Mārīcī aspect of the Buddhist goddess Tārā is in fact the Buddhist interpretation, or rather the adaptation, of the Saurī-Caturakṣarī concept of the Brāhmaṇical goddess Caṇḍī or Devī inasmuch as both of them represent the solar concept of the Supreme goddess of the respective faiths. Similarities between the two in respect of certain iconographic features add strength to such a probability. Saurī-Caturakṣarī is described as holding in her hands a noose and an elephant-goad (*dhartripāśāṅkuṣeṣṭā*). These two, it is interesting, figure almost invariably in the list of attributes of Mārīcī as given in the *sādhanas*.⁵³

Another interesting point deserves mention in this context. We know that Cundā is an important form of the Buddhist goddess Tārā.⁵⁴ The conceptual and

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iconographic similarities existing between the Buddhist goddess Tārā and the Brāhmanical goddess Caṇḍī are also quite well-known. It is interesting that in China, Chun-T'ī, i.e., Cundī or Cundā and Mārīcī have completely merged into one goddess; the former is represented there not only with almost all typical features of Mārīcī, but she is also known there as the goddess one of whose manifestations is known as Mārīcī.⁵⁵

From the above survey it appears that the concept of the Buddhist solar goddess Mārīcī is derived from a similar solar concept of the Supreme Brāhmanical goddess Caṇḍī, most probably from her Saurī-Caturakṣarī concept which represents the ideology of syncretism between the cults of the Śāktas and of the Sauras. It may, however, be argued that the derivation of the concept of Mārīcī from that of Saurī-Caturakṣarī is not possible, because the latter concept is found only in the *Śilparatna*, a sixteenth century text, whereas the concept of Mārīcī as a Buddhist solar goddess is as old as the eleventh century, if not older. But it should be remembered that the *Śilparatna* in its present compilation is no doubt a sixteenth century work. However, there is no doubt that it contains many earlier materials collected from various sources. Moreover, that the solar concept of the goddess Caṇḍī was conceived of even before the *Śilparatna* is testified to by the Devīmāhātmya section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*. The *Skanda-Purāṇa* refers to the goddess Marīcīkā as the guardian deity of the eastern quarters of Antarvedi (the land between the Ganges and the Jumna).⁵⁶ It is possible to recognise in this goddess the prototype of the Buddhist goddess Mārīcī.

The Buddhists took up the solar concept of Caṇḍī and converted that into their goddess-concept of Mārīcī. They also applied a similar treatment to the concept of Śaktigaṇapati, already referred to. It is interesting that in the later Buddhist pantheon, we come across a goddess known as Gaṇapatihrīdayā⁵⁷ whose concept seems to have been derived from that of Śaktigaṇapati of the Brāhmaṇists. Another conspicuous iconographic feature of Mārīcī is her sow-face (*śūkaramukhā*) and the chariot drawn by seven pigs (*saptāśūkararathārūḍhā*). As a solar deity she should have more logically been associated with horses like her Brāhmanical male counterpart, Sūrya. Her prototype, Saurī-Caturakṣarī of the *Śilparatna*, does not also have anything to do with horses. But in the same chapter of the *Śilparatna* dealing with the Saurī-Caturakṣarī form of the Devī, there is the description of her horse-mounted form (*aśvārūḍhā* or *aśvasamsthā*)⁵⁸ as well. Thus it appears that the Brāhmanical Devī was conceived not only as a solar deity, but also as horse-mounted. However, on some documentary evidence, to be discussed later in this chapter, it can be presumed that at certain stage, the Buddhists might have also experimented with an iconographic form of the goddess Mārīcī with her chariot drawn by horses, instead of by pigs.

In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* manuscript, there is an illustration of the two-handed form of Mārīcī with an accompanying identificatory inscription: *dvibhujāmārīcī caityaḥ*.⁵⁹ This presumably represents an initial stage, when in the iconography of the goddess, neither the horse nor the pig played any role. The Uḍḍiyāna form of Mārīcī, depicted in the same manuscript (Plate 6), represents a

step forward: the goddess here is ten-armed and three-faced, one of the faces being that of a sow. But her pig associates or *vāhanas* are yet to come.

In Bihar, a six-armed and three-faced image of Mārīcī has been found (Plate 7), and one of the faces of the goddess is that of a sow. Moreover, there is the representation of seven horses on the pedestal. An identical image of the goddess has also been found in Salihundam in the Chikacola Taluk of the Ganjam district in Orissa (Plate 8). Similar to the Uḍḍiyāna form of Mārīcī discussed above, in these two images the sow face of the goddess is retained, but significantly there has been the addition of an innovation: the seven horses on the pedestal. It is not unlikely that these two images represent a stage when the image-makers retained the sow-face of the goddess, but with a view to bringing out her solar character, the horses, a veritable cognizance of the Sun god, were added to her image. It is not altogether unlikely that the concept of the horse-mounted form of the Brāhmaṇical Devī, as described in the *Śilparatna* and referred to above, was at the back of the mind of the image-makers at this stage. These two images, however, could also be interpreted as the fabrication of some neo-converts to Buddhist form of worship, who, while expressing iconographically the solar concept of the goddess, could not but look back into their anterior Brāhmaṇical repertoire and introduce the horses in her iconography as the possible point of reference to the solar god of their earlier faith.⁶⁰ But whatever might be the case, it appears that these two images probably represent a transitional stage after which the horses were substituted with the pigs in the images of Mārīcī.

By such a substitution the sow-face of the goddess was no doubt rationalised with her *vāhana*. But why the choice fell on the pig or *varāha* is not very clear, although one can speculate on its possible relevance and implication. Mārīcī is repeatedly invoked as Vārāhī or Vajravārāhī, and although there are often separate *sādhana*s for the goddess Vārāhī or Vajravārāhī, she, in the ultimate analysis, is the same as Mārīcī. It cannot be definitely said whether the concept of Vārāhī or Vajravārāhī of Buddhism, and for that matter the same of the goddess Mārīcī, is in any way indebted to the well-known Brāhmaṇical concept of Vārāhī as a *mātrikā* (mother goddess), but it is significant that the latter, like Mārīcī or Vajravārāhī of the Buddhist pantheon, is often depicted as having a sow-face.

Many of the celebrated Vajrayāna Buddhist saints, we know, belonged to the so-called despised classes. Jālandharipā, also known as Hāḍipā, was by caste a *Hāḍī* (basket-maker or potter), Tāntipā was a *Tāntī* or *Tantuvāya* (weaver), Dombī-Heruka was a *Dom* (attendant at the funeral ground), and Śaraha and Śabaripāda were *Śabaras* (an aboriginal tribe residing in the hills), to cite a few examples.⁶¹ Some of the beliefs, customs, and rites of the people belonging to these castes presumably percolated into the Tantrayāna system. That these people were given some special position in tāntric practices is evident from the very fact that women of the lowest classes, such as the *Caṇḍālas* or *Dombīs*, were specially recommended for the purpose of the *Mahāmudrā* perfection.⁶² It is well-known that the pig is a favourite animal with many of these lower caste people, and that even some of them, like the *Dombīs*, *Hāḍīs*, and the *Caṇḍālas*, domesticate pigs. A

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totemistic association of the pig with these people is also a possibility. Thus it is not too unlikely that the pig was associated with the goddess Mārīcī not only to indicate her iconographic distinctiveness, but also to show some preference for the pet of the so-called despised people—a gesture that might have given them some sense of belonging, and this ensured their support for and adherence to the Vajrayāna-Tantrayāna Buddhist faith.

It is, however, to be noted that the number of pigs associated with Mārīcī does not seem to have been seven at the initial stage. In a *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha* manuscript there is the illustration of the eight-handed form of Mārīcī seated on a chariot drawn by four pigs only (Plate 9), although the *Sādhana-mālā* prescribes for such a form of the goddess a chariot drawn by seven pigs,⁶³ and this is mostly followed in the artistic representation of this form.⁶⁴ Although the presence of only four pigs in the aforesaid illustration (Plate 9) is quite unique, it cannot, however, be explained away as an aberration. It is to be noted that some of the early images of the Brāhmaṇical Sun-god, e.g., those from Bodhgayā, Gāndhārā, Mathurā, and Lālā-Bhagat pillar, have each a chariot drawn by only four horses, instead of the usual seven.⁶⁵ These images presumably represent an intermediate phase between the earliest Sūrya images and their fully evolved forms in Northern India. The evolution of the images of Mārīcī can probably also likewise be ascertained with reference to the number of pigs attending the image of goddess. We have already referred to a representation of the two-handed form of Mārīcī without any pig, e.g., the one from the manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*. Getty also illustrates an image of Mārīcī seated on a single pig.⁶⁶ Clark reproduces the photographs of two images of the goddess, one in painting and the other in metal sculpture, both of them having only two pigs each fixed to the chariot.⁶⁷ The manuscript of the *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha*, we have already seen, illustrates the goddess with four pigs. Gordon and Getty reproduce the photographs of two images of Mārīcī, each having five pigs to draw the chariot of the goddess.⁶⁸ And we know of numerous images of the goddess with the usual seven pigs.⁶⁹

Thus we find that we know of images of Mārīcī having no pig, one pig, two, four, five, and seven pigs. It will not be proper to regard the first five forms as mere aberrations simply because these forms lack the corroborative textual prescription at the present state of our knowledge. It rather appears to us that although no definite chronological sequence can be ascribed to the images belonging to the above-mentioned five forms, and although they are not of the same provenance, they are probably the representatives of the survival of the different stages of evolution of the image of the goddess Mārīcī, with particular reference, of course, to the association of the pigs with her iconography.

IV

Vasudhārā is another important form of the Buddhist goddess Tārā. She is essentially a goddess of wealth, as her name implies—stream of wealth. This aspect of the

goddess is reflected in her iconography: she holds in her hands the *dhānyamañjarī* (sheaf of corn), *ratnamañjarī* (sheaf of jewels), *bhadrāghaṭa* (auspicious jar, evidently full of treasures), and exhibits in one of the hands the *varada* pose showing or showering treasures.⁷⁰ In view of this, Agrawala has traced her concept to that of the goddess Hiraṇyavakṣā (meaning the goddess with golden bosom, i.e., the goddess of wealth) described in the *Atharvaveda*.⁷¹ At the same time, in this regard, the similarity between the concept of Vasudhārā and that of Śrī or Lakṣmī of the Brāhmaṇical pantheon is also unmistakable.

But it has to be pointed out that the goddess Vasudhārā has another aspect of her concept. She is not only a goddess of wealth and abundance, but of learning and knowledge as well. She is often called Prajñāpāramitā, Vidyādāneśvareśvarī, Sarasvatī⁷², etc., and she is sometimes invoked as an embodiment of knowledge (*jñānamūrti*).⁷³ As an iconographic expression of this, the goddess is almost invariably shown with a book in her hand. All these make Vasudhārā conceptually similar to Sarasvatī, the Brāhmaṇical goddess of learning. From the above it appears that the Buddhist goddess Vasudhārā combines, in her, concepts of Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and abundance, and of Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning and knowledge. That she has this composite nature is evident from the iconography, particularly of one form of the goddess, namely, her six-handed form (Plate 10) in which the characteristics of the goddess of wealth as well as those of the goddess of learning, as outlined above, are simultaneously present.

Although Lakṣmī is predominantly known as the goddess of wealth, instances of her conception as the goddess of learning are also not unknown. The *Viṣṇu-Furāna*⁷⁴ refers to Lakṣmī as intellect, the *Silparatna*,⁷⁵ the *Tantrasāra*⁷⁶, and an inscription on a Nepalese *paṭa*⁷⁷ include *vidyā* or a book as an attribute of Lakṣmī. According to the *Tantrasāra*, the *Lakṣmī-kavaca* ensures a person proficiency in all branches of knowledge.⁷⁸ Moreover, it is known that the image of Lakṣmī, now preserved in the Vangiya Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, has a book in one of the left hands.⁷⁹ The Nepalese *paṭa*, referred to above, shows this iconographic characteristic of Lakṣmī as well.⁸⁰ Similarly, Sarasvatī is also often referred to as the goddess of wealth and prosperity. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*⁸¹ invokes Sarasvatī as the mistress of prosperity. In the *Rigveda*,⁸² too, Sarasvatī as a river-goddess has been characterised as the giver of treasures of all sorts. Even as late as A.D. 1354 (Vikram era 1411), expressions like 'May that Sarasvatī grant you all prosperity' are to be found in epigraphic records.⁸³

From the above discussion, it appears that there was a parallel development of the concepts of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, and, in such a process, the two goddesses shared some features, both ideological and iconographic. This led to the characterisation of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī as the two sisters—the daughters of Śiva and Pārvatī⁸⁴—or as the co-wives of Viṣṇu.⁸⁵ Significantly, according to the *Samvatsarapradīpa*, pen and ink-pot (items connected with learning) should be worshipped on the occasion of the worship of both Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī.⁸⁶ According to the same account, this worship should be performed on the fifth day (*pañcamī*) of the bright half of the month of Māgha, which is dear to Śrī or Lakṣmī (*yā śrīyah*

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priyā).⁸⁷ It is significant that this day of the year is even to-day known as *Śrī-pañcamī*, although Sarasvatī,⁸⁸ instead of Lakṣmī, is worshipped on that day in many parts of India today.

It appears that at certain times the interchangeability of the goddesses—Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī—was recognised by the people, and this presumably led to the equation of the two as well, although the traditional legends about the rivalry between Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī might have simultaneously maintained a parallel survival. That there was an attempt for a *rapprochement* between the concepts of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī is evidenced by the *Mahāunmagga Jātaka*⁸⁹ wherein the Buddha explains that one requires to be wise in order to acquire and preserve wealth, or, in other words, that the concepts of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are not mutually exclusive but are complementary. The expression '*vāgdevyau*' in the dual number, as found in the Nagpur Praśasti⁹⁰ of A.D. 1108 (Vikram 1161) of the Paramāras, probably refers to the two goddesses of learning—Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī⁹¹—to indicate their complementary nature. And it is not unlikely that the concept of a composite form of these two goddesses is contained in this expression, similar to expressions like '*pitarau*' or '*pārvatīparameśvarau*', referring to the composite form of Śiva and Pārvatī, as found in the introductory verse of the *Raghuvamśam* of Kālidāsa.⁹² The concept of the Buddhist goddess Vasudhārā, particularly her well-known six-handed form, referred to above, answers to the ideology of a composite form of the goddess of learning and of wealth—the combination of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī in one form.

V

Almost all the manifestations of the goddess Tārā, thus, are found to be conceptually akin to, if not derived from, some concept or form already known. The Buddhist iconographers, in numerous cases, only took note of the already floating concepts or forms and adapted them to Buddhist usage. The various ideologies and iconographic formulations pertaining to the Supreme Female Energy (*śakti*) as obtained in the Brāhmaṇical pantheon, served as a veritable repertoire to derive the ingredients for the formulation of the concept and iconography of the goddess Tārā of the Buddhist pantheon. But it has to be admitted that the concept of the Supreme Goddess, both of the Brāhmaṇical faith as well as of Buddhism, can be traced back to a common heritage. This is true of almost all the important theologies of India. The primordial character of the Supreme Goddess is recognised by all the faiths. This sharing of the same concept, under different names and forms, is in fact the basic characteristic of Indian religions which are nothing but various means for the same ultimate end. The ideology of this intrinsic unity, and not merely of the outward similarity, has been very beautifully expressed in the Padmāvatīstotra:

Tārā tvaṃ sugatāgame bhagavatī Gaurīti śaivāgame |
Vajrā kaulikaśāsane, jīnamate Padmāvatī viśrutā ||

Gāyatrī śrutiśālinī Prakṛitirityuktāsi sām̐khyāgame |
Mātarbhārati kim prabhutabhaṇitairvyāptaṁ samastaṁ tvayā⁹³ ||

NOTES

1. TBIS, p. 40.
2. SM, No. 114.
3. Śrī Śrī Caṇḍī, Uttaracarita, XII, 26-29.
4. DHI, p. 492.
5. JAS, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, 1957, pp. 19-22.
6. DHI, p. 493.
7. Ms.B. 65, fol. 7A-B:
Kampayanti eṣo lokān trāsayan yakṣarākṣasāt |
nīlotpalakarā devī mābhairmābhairitī brūbaṇ ||
jagatsainrakṣaṇārthāya ahamutpādito janaiḥ |
tārayiṣyāmahaṁ sattvānrānābhayamahārjavāt |
tena Tāreti mām loka gāyanti munipuṅgavāḥ ||
8. Śrī Śrī Caṇḍī, Uttaracarita, Ch. XI, 39.
9. Ms.B.65, fol. 131B; Ms. G. 9985, fol. 3A.
10. Śrī Śrī Caṇḍī, Uttaracarita, Ch. VII, v. 9.
11. Śrī Śrī Caṇḍī, Uttaracarita, Ch. VIII, 60.
12. Ms.B. 65, fol. 132B.
13. Śrī Śrī Caṇḍī, Madhyamacarita; Devibhāgavata, 3rd skandha, Ch. III, v. 48.
14. Devigītā, Ch. III.
15. See IBI, for these various forms of the goddess Tārā.
16. GNB., p. 121.
17. Gordon, A.K., *Tibetan Religious Art*, New York, 1952, p. 62, and the plate facing p. 65; by the same authoress, *Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism*, New York, 1939, p. 75, plate 76 b.
In Snellgrove, D.L., *Buddhist Himalaya*, Oxford, 1957, p. 116, there is the mention of a form of Tārā with thousand hands and thousand eyes. This form is referred to there as the 'triumphant' form of the goddess. This is significant, because in the name, Mahāmāyāvijayavāhini, this triumphant and victorious (vijayavāhini) aspect of the goddess is implied.
18. Dasgupta, S.B., *Bhārater Śaktisādhana O Śaktasāhitya*, (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1367, Bengali Samvat, p. 192.
19. That Parṇasābarī is in fact a form of Tārā is evident from the *colophon statement* : Āryyaparṇasābarītārā dhārāṇī samāptā, as given in *sādhana* No. 150 of SM.
20. *Skanda-Purāṇa*, Māheśvarakhaṇḍa/Kedārakhaṇḍa, Ch. 35.
21. Harivaṁśa, Ch. II, Sec. iii, v. 7-8.
22. Peterson, P., ed., *Kādambarī*, Bombay Sanskrit Series, No. XXIV, 1883, p. 30.
23. *Bṛhatsaṁhitā*, Ch. 57, v. 29.
24. Bhattacharyya, Annadacharan, ed., *Amarakoṣa*, Calcutta, 1892, p. 485.
25. Pandit, S.P., ed., *Gauḍavaho*, Bombay, 1887, v. 285-347.
26. Smritiratna, Madhusudan, ed., *Kālaviveka*, Calcutta, 1905, p. 38; Sāhityashastri, Dwariknath, ed., *Durgotsavaviveka*, Sanskrita Sahitya Parishad Series, No. XIV, p. 24; Smritibhushan, Kamalkrishna, ed., *Varṣakriyākaumudī*, Calcutta, 1902, pp. 376-78; *Tithitattva* of Raghunandana, p. 40; Chakraborti, Bani, *Samājsaṁskāra Raghunandan* (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1964, pp. 158-9.
27. *Kālaviveka*, p. 33 ;

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*Śabaravarṇa iva parṇādyavṛtāḥ karmāliptaśarīro nānāvidhāsainvaddha
valgīta nṛityagītādiparo bhūtveti śabarotsavapadārthaḥ, krīḍākautūka-
maṅgalairityāsayamevārthataḥ, tathā bhagalingābhīdhānāśca bhaga-
lingapragītakaili | bhagalingakriyābhiśca krīḍayeyuralam janāḥ ||*

28. *Skanda Purāṇa*, Māheśvarakhaṇḍa/Kedārakhaṇḍa, Ch. 35, v. 12-14 :
*Eyamuktā tadā devī girijā sarvamaṅgalā |
śabarīrūpamāsthāya gantukāmā maheśvaram ||
śyāmā tanvī śikharadaśanā vimbavimbādharoṣṭhī sugrīvādhyā kucabhāranatā varddhitasnigdhaśeṣī |
madhye kṣāmā prithūkaṭitātā hemarambhoru gaurī palliyuktā varavalayinī varhivārḥavataṁsā ||
pāṇau mṛṇālasadṛiṣaṁ dadhatī ca cāpaṁ priṣṭhe lasatkṛitaketakibāṇakam |*
29. E.g., for the characterisation of the Śabarī form of Durgā as *palliyuktā*, see note 28 above, and the expression *karmāliptaśarīra* as found in the description of the rites connected with Śabarotsava, see note 27 above.
30. *SM*, Nos. 148-150.
31. E.g., Avalokiteśvara from Viṣṇu, Indra, and even Śiva; Mañjuśrī from Sarasvatī; Mārīcī from Sūrya; Vasudhārā from Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, etc.
32. *IBI*, pp. 344 ff.
33. For a discussion, see Pal, P. and Bhattacharyya, D.C., *The Astral Divinities of Nepal*, Varanasi, 1969, pp. 41 ff.
34. *Bṛīhat-Tantrasāra*, Vasumatī ed., p. 114 :
*Syāmām barhikalāpaśekharayuktāmāvaddhaparṇāśukām, guṇjāhāralasat payodharanatāmaṣṭāhipān
vibhratīm |
tāḍaṅkāṅgadamekhalāguṇarānanmañjīratām prāpitām, kairātīm varadābhayodyatakarām devīm
trinetram bhaje ||*
35. Chatterjee, S.K., Kirāta-Jana-Kṛiti, *JASB*, Letters, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (1950), p. 161.
36. *SM*, Vol. II, Introduction, p. 36.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 34 and 107. Saraha was also known as Sarahapāda. Sarahapā, Sarahabhadra, Rāhūlabhadra; he is styled as Ācārya, Mahācārya, Siddha, Yogī, Mahāyogī, Yogīśvara, Mahābrāhmaṇa, Mahāśabara, etc.
38. See note 28.
39. See note 34.
40. Dasgupta, *Op.cit.*, p. 140.
41. *NSP*, pp. 15 and 75.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
43. *SM*, No. 148.
44. Ms.G. 9089, fol. 40B :
*Bhavataḥ paścime devī sthitā vai parṇāśābalī (rī) |
Asyaiva dhyānayogena dagdhamatsyādi pūjayā ||*
45. The pañcatattva (theory of five) of tāntricism prescribes for the adherence to the *pañca ma-kāras* (five things having their names beginning with the letter *ma*), namely, *madya* (wine), *māṁsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *maithuna* (union of the male and the female), and *mudrā* (ritual gestures). It is interesting that some of these items are said to be dear to the goddess Durgā as well, see, for instance, the expression : *nityarūpā jagaddhātṛī surāmāṁsāsavapriyā*, *Skanda-Purāṇa*, Nāgarakhaṇḍa, Ch. 54, v. 22.
46. *Bhaviṣya-Purāṇa*, 7th kalpa, *Sahasranāmamāla* of Sūrya.
47. *DHI*, p. 438, footnote 1.
48. Pal, P., 'Composite form of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī', *JAS*, VOL. V, Nos. 3 and 4. (1963), pp. 74 ff; Bhattacharyya, D. C., 'The Composite image of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī', *JAS*, VOL. VIII; No. 4 (1966), pp. 261 ff. In the former, the author does not recognize any syncretism involved in the concept of the image of Vāsudeva and Lakṣmī.
49. *Śilparatna* (Trivendrum Sanskrit Series), Part II, Ch. XXV, v. 74.
50. The editor of the text (Trivendrum Sanskrit Series) gives the reading as 'yuvatimayamadho

- (*tam ?*) But it can be amended as 'yuvatīmayamadhastalām'.
51. *Śilparatna*, Part II, Ch. XXIV, v. 73 :
*Bhāsvadratnaughamanī sphūradamṛitaruco rāñjayaccārūrekhā,
Sadyahsantaptakārtasvara kamalajapabhāsūrabhīḥ prabhābhīḥ |
Viśvākāśavakāśam jvalayadaśīśiram dharṭrī pāśāṅkuṣeṣṭā |
Bhītīnāṁ bhañgītūṅgastanamavatu jaganmāturarkam vapurvaḥ ||*
 52. Vasu, N.N., *The Archaeological Survey of Mayurbhanja*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1911, p. xcii.
 53. *SM*, Nos. 132, 135-7, and 146 mention both *pāśa* and *aikuśa* as the attributes ; in Nos. 134 and 142 only *aikuśa* is mentioned; only *pāśa* is mentioned in Nos. 138-40, 143, and 145.
 54. Whitaker, K. P. K. 'A Buddhist Spell', *Asia Major*, New Series, Vol. X, part I, pp.9-22.
 55. Dore, *Researches into Chinese Superstitions*, Tr. by M. Kennely, Vol. VII, Sanghai, 1922, Fig. 55 facing p. 306; see also the Chapter, 'Mārīcī, goddess of the Dawn' of that book.
 56. *Skanda-Purāṇa*, Puruṣottamakṣetra, Ch. 4, v. 43-50.
 57. Her description is found in the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṁgraha*, Ms. No. G. 8055, fol. 43 A.
 58. *Śilparatna*, Part II, Ch. XXIV, v. 55.
 59. Cambridge University Library Ms. No. Add. 1643, fol. 222.
 60. These images could even be the documents of an attempt towards a syncretism between Vajrayāna Buddhism and Hinduism. The transference of the *vāhana* or any other iconographic feature of a deity to another for such a purpose is a phenomenon quite well-known in Indian Iconography. See Bhattacharyya, D. C., 'Brahmanyadeva-Viṣṇu, a composite form of Viṣṇu and Kārttikeya', *Journal of the Varendra Research Museum*, Vol. 3 (1974), pp. 14-25.
 61. *SM*, Vol. II, Introduction, pp. 30 ff.
 62. *Ibid*, p. 43.
 63. *SM*, Nos. 134, 137, 142, 146. The *SM* also associates other forms of Mārīcī with seven pigs, e. g., No. 135 (ten-handed), 139 (twelve-handed).
 64. Bhattacharyya, D. C., 'An interesting image of the goddess Mārīcī', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Ranchi Session, 1964, pp. 91-4.
 65. *DHI*, pp. 322-344.
 66. *GNB*, pl. XLI, Fig. a.
 67. *TLP*, Fig. Nos. 6B. 2-92 in p. 207, and 246-801 in p. 286.
 68. Gordon, *Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism*, Fig. I, plate facing p. 74; *GNB*, pl. XXXIX. b.
 69. Bhattacharyya, N.K., *Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Dacca, 1929, pls XIII and XV ; *IBI*, Figs. 152-4.
 70. *TBIS*, p. 36.
 71. Agrawala, V. S., Vasudhārā, *JISOA*, Vol. VII (1939), p. 17.
 72. Ms. No. B. 49, fol. 2A.
 73. The *Vasundharoddeśa*, a Ms. No. G. 4840 contains the following :
bhagavatī vasudhāre jñānamūrtiṁ namāḥ!haṁ. See Mukhopadhyay, B.N., Vasudhārā, *vasudhārā*, (in Bengali), 4th year, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 25.
 74. Wilson's translation, 1840, p. 60.
 75. Ch. XXII, v. 23 ; Ch. XXV, 75.
 76. *Bṛihat Tantrasāra* (Vasumatī, ed.), p. 192.
 77. *JAS*, Vol. V, Nos. 3 and 4, 1963, pp. 74 ff.
 78. *Bṛihat Tantrasāra*, p. 487 :
*vidyārthinā sadā sevya viśeṣe viṣṇuvallabhā ||. . . kavacāṁ mama sukaṁvita supāṇḍitya sarvasi-
ddhī samriddhaye viniyogaḥ ||*
 79. Banerji, R. D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture*, Delhi, 1933, p. 121, pl. LXII. a
 80. *JAS*, Vol. V, Nos. 3 and 4, 1963, pp. 74 ff.
 81. *Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, 11.4.3.7 and 11.4.3.16.
 82. *Rigveda* 1.1.64.
 83. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XI, p. 102.

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84. According to Charu Chandra Bandopadhyay, the two goddesses are referred to as such in the *Nāradiya-*, *Dharma-*, and *Kūrma-Purāṇa* (see his *Chaṇḍimaṅgalabodhinī*, Vol. I, pp. 47, 89).
85. Cf. the well-known verse :
ekābhāryā prakṛitimukharā cañcalā ca dvitīyā, etc.
86. Bhattacharyya, S.M., *Purohita-Darpaṇa* (in Bengali), 1368 Bengali Samvat, p. 245.
87. *Ibid.*
88. According to the account given in the *Purohita-Darpaṇa* (*Ibid.*), Sarasvatī is to be worshipped the day before this *pañcamī* (*tasyāin pūrvāhna eva ca kāryaḥ sārvasvatotsavaḥ*).
89. *Jātaka*, Pali Text Society Series, Vol. VI, pp. 356-62.
90. *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. II, p. 182.
91. D.C. Sircar, ed., *Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī in Art and Literature*, Calcutta, 1970, p. 140.
92. Bhattacharyya, D. C. An Apītakucā image from Kāgajipārā, Bangladesh, *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. XXXVI (1974), Nos. 1/2, pp. 89-94.
93. *Bhairavapadmāvatīkalpa*, published by Digambar Jain Pustakalaya, Surat, 1953, pp. 124-5.

THREE

Iconography of Prajñāpāramitā (Introductory)

I

The goddess Prajñāpāramitā occupies a very exalted position in the Buddhist pantheon. She is believed to be the personification of 'transcendental knowledge' embodied in the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, a famous Mahāyāna Buddhist scripture. It is said to have been restored to mankind by Nāgārjuna from the Nāgas, to whom, it is believed, the *sūtra* was entrusted by the Buddha himself to guard until mankind was sufficiently enlightened to receive and understand its 'transcendent wisdom'.¹

The term *prajñāpāramitā* is indicative of the highest possible point of the development of wisdom. In the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the practice of a particular *pāramitā* (perfection) is enjoined for the attainment of a particular *bhūmi* (spiritual sphere).² There were hence ten *pāramitās* corresponding to the ten *bhūmis*. It is also stated there that *prajñāpāramitā*, i.e., perfect knowledge or knowledge *par excellence*, can be obtained in the sixth sphere.³ The number of the *pāramitās* was later raised by the Vajrayānists from ten to twelve, and in their system, *prajñāpāramitā* was to be achieved in the seventh stage.⁴ Although in its origin, *Prajñāpāramitā* was a term of 'religious psychology', by easy transition it came to mean the Book in which the virtue of 'transcendental wisdom' was explained. Conze has very convincingly analyzed the various stages of the evolution of the Book to a deity. He contends that the Book of the 'transcendental knowledge' soon assumed a sacred character due to the Buddhist belief that the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* was transmitted orally from Lord Buddha himself; and this sanctity ultimately led to its deification into a goddess who naturally then had also to be ascribed an iconic form.⁵

This is, indeed, a very logical analysis of how the metaphysical concept of the 'transcendental wisdom' could have possibly been transformed into an iconic

concept. But the origin of the goddess-concept of Prajñāpāramitā can also be traced from another point of view. We know that in the Hīnayāna, the three Buddhist jewels (*ratna* or *śaraṇa*)—Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—were represented by aniconic symbols.⁶ In Mahāyāna, the Trinity or the Three Jewels became *Prajñā*, *Upāya* and Bodhisattva, i.e., the spiritualised forms of Dharma, Buddha and Saṅgha respectively.⁷ Transferred to stone or canvas, *Prajñā* becomes a female deity, *Upāya* and Bodhisattva become male deities.⁸ In the manuscript of the *Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā*, there is a miniature painting with the accompanying inscription: 'puṇḍravardhane triśaraṇaḥ', i.e., Triśaraṇa (Buddhist Trinity or three Jewels) in Puṇḍravardhana⁹ (roughly north Bengal). In the painting, there are three figures, Buddha in the centre and a male and a female figure to his right and left respectively. It is noteworthy that the figure to the left (Plate 17) of Buddha is that of a female, evidently representing *Prajñā*, the Mahāyānist interpretation of the Jewel, Dharma.

In the shrine of Amitābha at the Svayambhu-caitya in Nepal, there is a female figure inscribed with the words: *dharmāya namaḥ*, i.e., obeisance to Dharma. Moreover, in Nepal, there is a typical representation of the Buddhist Trinity in which a female figure having the iconographic features of a well-known four-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā seems to represent *Prajñā* or Dharma.¹⁰ Thus it seems that the Buddhist Jewel Dharma was transformed as *Prajñā* in the Mahāyāna system, and it is this *Prajñā* which later developed into the goddess-concept of Prajñāpāramitā who was considered to be the quintessence of the Doctrine (Dharma).

This line of thought for the origin and development of the goddess-concept of Prajñāpāramitā does in no way contradict the theory of Conze mentioned above. The two theories, on the other hand, are complementary to each other. The very acceptance of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* as one of the Jewels (*ratna*) by the Mahāyānists was no doubt in recognition of its unique intrinsic value as well as its sacredness due to its association, as believed, with the Buddha himself. Similarly, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was also recognized as a Jewel, the Jewel of the Buddhist Church (*Saṅgharatna*), because of his unparalleled sacrifices of the well-earned Nirvāṇa for the welfare of mankind, and because of his other merciful activities as recorded in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*.¹¹ It is interesting that one of the Jewels, *Prajñā*, was conceived as a female. This was an innovation of the Vajrayānists who first introduced into Buddhism, the worship of the female principle (*prajñā*). This attributive femininity of the Jewel made it a potential goddess-concept, which ultimately gave rise to the concept of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā.

It is to be mentioned in this connection that in the Buddhist scriptures, it is written that Ādi-Dharma revealed herself from the central point of a triangle. From one side of the triangle she 'produced Buddha; from another side, Dharma; and from the third side, Saṅgha. The Dharma that issued from the second side is the wife of the Buddha of the first side and the mother of the other Buddhas.¹² Now we find that both the Ādi-Dharma and Dharma, the Jewel (*śaraṇa* or *ratna*), are conceived here as females, and moreover, the latter is conceived not only as the wife of the Buddha, but also as the mother of the other Buddhas.¹³ Interestingly, the

goddess Prajñāpāramitā is also conceived as the mother of the Buddhas, as well as the wife of the Buddha Gautama. The latter concept of the goddess is to be found in the *Ekallavīa-Canḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*. In this work, there is the account of an interesting discourse between the goddess Prajñāpāramitā and the Buddha. There the god Canḍaroṣaṇa declares that he is the same as the son of Māyādevī, that means, same as Gautama Buddha, and the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is the same as Gopā, that means, same as the wife of Gautama Buddha (*Māyādevīsutaścāham..... tvameva bhagavatī gopā prajñāpāramitātmikā*).¹⁴ Thus it is clear that here the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is conceived as the wife of the Buddha.

But it should be remembered that whatever might be the conceptual changes of Prajñāpāramitā through the ages, the goddess continued to be recognized, till the recent times, as the goddess of Supreme Knowledge. Even in the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* of Amṛtānanda, a nineteenth century work, the name of the goddess is explained as:

*Devyā nāma kimucyate cet prajñā nāma prakṛiṣṭam jñānam, tasya pāramitā pāramgatā, jñānasamudrapāragāminī, sarvajñānapūrṇā iti prajñāpāramitā nāma.*¹⁵

That means :

‘What is the meaning of the name of the goddess? *Prajñā* means knowledge *par excellence*, *pāramitā* means one who possesses that knowledge. Thus Prajñāpāramitā means one who has crossed the ocean of knowledge, that means, one who possesses total knowledge.’

II

Prajñāpāramitā shares certain concepts with Tārā, who is usually assigned the supreme position in the Buddhist pantheon. We have already noted that Prajñāpāramitā is recognized as the ‘mother of the Buddhas’, and it is significant that the goddess Tārā is known as the mother of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.¹⁶ Moreover, we have found that in some late traditions, the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is referred to as the wife of the Buddha, more precisely, as the wife of Gautama Buddha. A similar concept of the goddess Tārā is also found in the *Tārābhaṭṭārikānāma-stotraśata*,¹⁷ where the goddess is referred to as Gautamī, evidently meaning, the consort of Gautama Buddha.

Besides, there are several other points in which we find conceptual similarities between Tārā and Prajñāpāramitā. We know that Prajñāpāramitā means ‘wisdom that has gone beyond’, to the other shore, meaning *Nirvāṇa*. The name Tārā, it is interesting to note, also has a similar meaning. The name is often explained as ‘*Tārayatyamita duḥkhabhavāt*’,¹⁸ which means Tārā helps to go across this world of misery, evidently, to *Nirvāṇa*.

It is also noteworthy that, like Prajñāpāramitā, the goddess Tārā is also almost

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invariably found to be closely associated with wisdom (*prajñā*). In an eleventh century Canarese inscription, it is stated that Tārā 'sprang from the ocean of gnosis, she is known as *Prajñā*', and that she is the supreme incarnation of enlightenment in the three worlds (*yā jñānārṇava-maṁthanāt samuditā prajñeti yā kathayate yā buddhasya vibhūtidā tribhuvane bodhi svarūpā*).¹⁹ The connection of the goddess Tārā with knowledge or wisdom is also evident from her epithets '*sarasvatī-viśālākṣī-prajñāśrī-buddhivardhanī*', etc., found in the *Tārābhaṭṭārikānāma-stotraśata*.²⁰ In the same place of the text, referred to above, the name *Prajñāpāramitā* is mentioned as one of the most important names of the goddess Tārā. Thus there is no doubt that *Prajñāpāramitā* is a form of Tārā.

In the Buddhist pantheon, Tārā is the Supreme Female Principle (*śakti*), and of the numerous manifestations of this concept, *Prajñāpāramitā* is one, and perhaps the most important one. As these are manifestations, and not emanations, of the Supreme Female Concept, each of them is regarded as equal to, and as such the same as, the Supreme Concept. This becomes clear when we find that in the *Ekalla-vīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*, *Prajñāpāramitā* is mentioned as the Supreme Female Principle (*strīrūpabhāvanā prajñāpāramitā pracakṣyate*),²¹ although we know that *Prajñāpāramitā* is the name of one of the numerous manifestations of Tārā, the Supreme Female concept of the Buddhist theology.²²

It is to be mentioned that *Prajñāpāramitā* has also several manifestations, each forming a *pāramitā*-goddess concept. We know that according to the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, there are ten *pāramitās*, corresponding to the ten *bhūmis*, and that *Prajñāpāramitā* is the sixth *pāramitā*, in as much as it is obtainable in the sixth *bhūmi*.²³ It is stated in the *Advayavajrasaṁgraha* that *Prajñāpāramitā* is the essence of the five other *pāramitās* (*prajñāpāramitā hi pañcapāramitānām samāhārah*),²⁴ which means that it is from *Prajñāpāramitā* that the five other *pāramitās* originate. In the *Ekalla-vīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*, we find the reason for the five manifestations of *Prajñāpāramitā*. There *Prajñāpāramitā* herself says, 'there are many women who cannot realise my presence in every female body; it is for their benefit that I myself reside in five forms' (*mām na jānanti ye nāryyāḥ sarvāstridehasaṁsthitāḥ|tāsamaham hitārthāya pañcākāreṇa saṁsthitā*).²⁵ Undoubtedly, this idea may be at the root of the increase in number of the manifestations of *Prajñāpāramitā* from time to time, and of the increase of the number of *pāramitās* from ten, as recorded in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*,²⁶ to twelve, as one notices in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*,²⁷ and ultimately to fourteen or even more.²⁸

III

In the Buddhist pantheon, Tārā is considered to be the consort of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.²⁹ *Prajñāpāramitā*, on the other hand, is regarded as the female energy of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, because the latter, like *Prajñāpāramitā*, is the personification of 'transcendental wisdom'.³⁰ It is also interesting to note that *Prajñāpāramitā* was regarded as the female energy of Lokeśvara, a form of

Avalokiteśvara, in many parts of Indo-China.³¹ This Prajñāpāramitā is no doubt the same as the Śaḍakṣarī Mahāvidyā who is the female associate of Śaḍakṣarī Lokeśvara form of Avalokiteśvara.³²

The most interesting account of the male counterpart of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is perhaps contained in the *Ekallavīra-Canḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*, which not only upholds Canḍaroṣaṇa and Prajñāpāramitā as the Supreme Male and Female Principles respectively, but also equates them respectively with the son of Māyādevī, i.e., Gautama Buddha, and his wife Gopā. The following is an extract from a manuscript of the above-mentioned work:³³

*Atha bhagavatī prajñāpāramitā āha,
Ka bhagavān māyādevīsutaḥ Kā ca gopā?
Bhagavānāha,
Māyādevīsutaśchāhaṁ caṇḍaroṣaṇatām gataḥ/
Tvameva bhagavatī gopā prajñāpāramitātmikā||
Yāvantastu striyaḥ sarvāstadrūpeṇaiva ta matāḥ/
Madrūpeṇa pumāṁsastu sarva eva prakīrtitāḥ||
Dvayorbhāvagataṁ caitat prajñopāyātmakam jagat|.*

This means:

‘Then the goddess prajñāpāramitā asked, “Who is the son of Māyādevī and who is Gopā?” The god replied, “I am the son of Māyādevī presently manifested as Canḍaroṣaṇa, and you are Gopā presently manifested as Prajñāpāramitā. All women are your manifestations and all men are mine. This world is a union of the two, *prajñā* and *upāya*, respectively.”’

Thus we find here Canḍaroṣaṇa being regarded as the male counterpart of Prajñāpāramitā. Like his female counterpart, Canḍaroṣaṇa is also an emanation of the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya.³⁴ But the *Sādhanamālā* does not mention the name of the *śakti* (female energy) of Canḍaroṣaṇa. It appears that, probably, the *Canḍaroṣaṇa-Tantra* first introduced Prajñāpāramitā as the *śakti* of the god Canḍaroṣaṇa, and it was no doubt a very logical introduction, because both the god and goddess are emanations of the same Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya. The earliest manuscript so far known of the *Ekallavīra-Canḍaroṣaṇa-Tantra* bears a date 435 in Newari Samvat,³⁵ corresponding to A.D. 1315. And we already know that the date of the earliest known manuscript of the *Sādhanamālā* is A.D. 1165. Thus we can tentatively say that Prajñāpāramitā came to be regarded as the *śakti* or female energy of Canḍaroṣaṇa in a period roughly between A.D. 1165 and A.D. 1315.

In this context another point deserves mention. The Nepalese painters almost always represent Canḍaroṣaṇa in embrace (*yab-yum*) with his *śakti*, and as the *Sādhanamālā* does neither mention such a form of Canḍaroṣaṇa, nor name the *śakti* of the god, the document of Nepal painters seem to create some amount of confusion.³⁶ But after we have the above-mentioned evidence at our disposal, there remains no confusion. It is now quite clear that the Nepalese painters follow the

Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa-Tantra tradition while making the painted image of Caṇḍaroṣaṇa, and the yab-yum type of image made by them is in fact a representation of the idea: 'dvayorbhāvagataṃ caitat prajñāpāyātmakaṃ jagat'—'The world is the unified manifestation of *prajñā* and *upāya*, the former being *Prajñāpāramitā* Herself, and Caṇḍaroṣaṇa, the *upāya*.'

IV

It is very difficult to ascertain the date of origin of the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā*. According to the Buddhist tradition, Nāgārjuna introduced the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* to the people. If this Nāgārjuna is the same as the founder of the Mādhyamaka school of Philosophy, who flourished in the second century A.D.,³⁷ then we have to believe that the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, not to speak of its deified goddess-concept, was unknown to the people before the second century A.D. But according to Edward Conze, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* Book was composed before A.D. 100.³⁸ And the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* speaks of the worship of the written copies of the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book with flowers, incense, etc., and with row of lamps all around.³⁹ Thus it appears that (a) either the association of Nāgārjuna with the introduction of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is a myth, or (b) Nāgārjuna associated with that tradition is not the same as Nāgārjuna of the Mādhyamaka school of Philosophy, and that the deification of the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book took place almost simultaneously with its composition, the date of which may roughly be put as A.D. 100, following Conze.

But it is highly doubtful whether the goddess-concept, not to speak of the image-concept, of *Prajñāpāramitā* originated so early, though of course the divinity of the Book of 'transcendental knowledge' seems to have been recognised since the beginning of the Christian era. The goddess-concept, and also the image-concept, of *Prajñāpāramitā* was evolved most probably during the time of Asaṅga, if not earlier. One of the *Prajñāpāramitā-sādhana*s of the *Sādhanaṃālā* is ascribed to the authorship of Asaṅga⁴⁰ who flourished in circa A.D. 300.⁴¹ Accordingly, it can be presumed that the image-concept of *Prajñāpāramitā* might have originated at least by circa A.D. 300. This date seems to be very probable, because it was also round about A.D. 300 that the Buddhist concept about deities, *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas* and other t̃āntric practices became systematised in the *Guhyasamājatantra*.⁴² Moreover, we know that the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien (A.D. 394—A.D. 414) saw in India images of *Prajñāpāramitā* being worshipped.⁴³ Thus it appears that the image concept of *Prajñāpāramitā* might have been established and to a certain extent systematised by the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century A.D.

It is not possible to say anything conclusively about the place of origin of the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā*. But that the worship of the goddess was at a certain time very popular in eastern India is known from some evidence. In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* manuscript,⁴⁴ there are some miniature paintings of several Buddhist gods and goddesses together with their identificatory inscriptions. Fortunately for

us, these inscriptions not only disclose the identification of the illustrated gods and goddesses, but also mention the names of some places associated with the respective gods and goddesses. It is interesting that in such an inscription, the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* is associated with the *Gridhrakūṭa* mountain,⁴⁵ identified with the mountain in modern Rajgir in Bihar. This probably points to the popularity that the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* might have had enjoyed at least in the eleventh century A.D.⁴⁶ in Bihar, and probably in the adjoining places of eastern India. It is even not unlikely that the particular form of *Prajñāpāramitā*, illustrated in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* manuscripts (Plate 11) might have originated in this locality. The discovery of several images, in sculpture and painting, of the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* from different places of Bengal and Bihar also testifies to the popularity of the goddess in these centres of eastern India. The prevalence of the worship of the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* in Mathura region in the fourth century A.D. is no doubt referred to by the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien,⁴⁷ but this particular reference cannot be taken as any pointer to the land of origin of the image-concept of the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā*.

NOTES

1. *IBI*, p. 197.
2. Dutt, N., 'Popular Buddhism', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, p. 263.
3. Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 275.
4. *NSP*, p. 56.
5. Conze, E., 'Remarks on a Pāla Ms. in the Bodleian Library', *Oriental Art*, Vol. I, No. I, p. 10.
6. Foucher, A., *Etude sur l'Iconographie Bouddhique de l'Inde*, Ist. part, pp. 428-29.
7. *ADV*, Introduction, p. 4. Fig. 1.
8. *Ibid*.
9. Asiatic Society Ms. No. A. 15, fol. 37; cf. Cambridge Ms. No. Add. 1643, fol. 20 : '*pundra-varddhana trīṣaṇa-buddhabhaṭṭāraka*'.
10. Oldfield, H.A., *Sketches from Nepal*, Vol. I, pp. 158-159; *Oriental Art*, Vol. III, No. 3, Fig. 6, *IBI*, p. 40. Bhattacharyya erroneously labels the female figure as Saṅgha, which should have been labelled as Dharma.
11. Samasrami, S., *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, ed. pp. 20 ff.
12. Hodgson, B. H., *Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, Varanasi, 1972, p. 87.
13. *SM*, No. 159.
14. Ms. No. G. 9089, fol. 16b.
15. Ms. No. G. 8055, fol. 85a.
16. *GNB*, p. 120.
17. Ms. No. B. 65, fol. 9a. This Ms. is very late; it is not 'probably earlier than the eighteenth century.
18. Blonay, C. de., *Materiaux pour servir a l'histoire de la deesse bouddhique Tārā*, p. 5 ; in fol. 7b of the Ms. No. B. 65, entitled *Tārābhaṭṭārīkānāma-stotraśata*, the name Tārā is explained as : '*tārayiṣyāmyaham sattvānānābhaya-mahārṇabāt, tena tāreti*' mām loke gūyanti munipuṅ-gavāḥ', meaning "as I help men in crossing the great ocean of peril, people call me Tārā."
19. Fleet, J.F., 'Sanskrit and Old-Canarese Inscriptions', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. X (1881), p. 185, Lines 2-3 of the inscription.

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20. Ms. No. B. 65, fol. 8b.
21. Ms. G. 9089, fol. 23a; cf. a similar concept of the Supreme goddess of Brāhmanism as given in the *Skandapurāṇa*, Nāgarakhaṇḍa, Ch. 54, v. 26.
22. *Āryatārāṣṭottaraśatanāma*, Ms. B. 33, fol. 4a; *Tārābhaṭṭārikānāma-stotraśata*, Ms. No. B. 65, fol. 8b.
23. Dutt, N., *Early History of Monastic Buddhism*, pp. 259 ff.
24. *ADV.*, p. 2.
25. Ms. No. G. 9089, fol. Ib.
26. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 259 ff.
27. *NSP*, p. 56
28. Clark, W. E., *Two Lamaistic Pantheons*, Cambridge, Mass, 1937, pp. 117 and 140, where mention is made of *Upāyakaśālyā-pāramitā* and *Vajrācāryā-pāramitā*. These names do not occur in the usual list of *pāramitās*, It may be that they are the new names of the already known *pāramitās* or just the names of some newly evolved *pāramitās* during the later phases.
29. Waddell, L.A., 'The Buddhist Cult of Avalokita and his consort Tārā, the Saviouress, Illustrated from the remains of Magadha', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1894, p. 54; Getty, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
30. *GNB*, p. 110.
31. *Ibid*, pp. 75 and 132.
32. *SM*, p. 72.
33. Ms. No. G. 9089, fol. 16b.
34. *SM*, p. 27.
35. See the post-colophon statement: *śubhamastu sainvat 435 miti.* This is the earliest dated manuscript of the *Ekallavīra-Cāṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*, that we could study.
36. *IBI*, p. 155.
37. *Ibid*, p. 197; *GNB*, p. 174.
38. 'Remarks on a pala Ms.,' *Oriental Art*, Vol. I, No. I, p. 9.
39. Conze, E., ed., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā*, Ch. III, p. 57.
40. *Sādhana* No. 159 which has the colophon '*kṛitiriyam ācāryyāsaṅgapādānam.*'
41. *IBI*, p. 10.
42. *Ibid*.
43. *A Record of Buddhist Kingdoms*, being an account of the Chinese monk Fa-Hien of his travels in India and Ceylon, translated and annotated by James Legge, Oxford, 1886, p. 46.
44. Cambridge University Library Ms. No. Add. 1643; Asiatic Society Ms. No. A. 15.
45. The inscription in the Cambridge Ms. reads: '*gridhrakūṭa parvate prajñāpāramitā*', and the inscription in the Asiatic Society Ms. reads. '*gridhrakūṭe Prajñāpāramitāḥ.*'
46. The Cambridge Ms. is dated in the Newari Samvat 135 (A.D 1015), and the Asiatic Society Ms. is dated in the Newari Samvat 191 (A.D. 1071).
47. See note 43 above.

FOUR

Iconography of Prajñāpāramitā

I

For a study of the iconography of the goddess prajñāpāramitā, we shall have to refer to the textual descriptions of the goddess in the *Sādhanamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. These two texts have already been published. Besides, some important data regarding the concept and iconography of the goddess are found in the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra* and the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* of Amṛitānanda. Manuscripts of these two unpublished texts, preserved in the library of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, bearing library numbers G. 9089 and G. 8055 respectively, have been utilised in this study.

In the *Sādhanamālā*, there are as many as nine *Sādhana*s (Nos. 151-159) with the iconographic description of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā. Of these, only one (*sādhana* No. 156) describes the four-handed form of the goddess, the remaining eight speak of her two-handed form. In addition to the descriptions of the *Sādhanamālā*, four other descriptions of the four-handed form of the goddess are known to us: one from the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* and the other three from the *Dharmakoṣa Saṃgraha*. It is to be mentioned, however, that all the three descriptions in the last-mentioned text refer, more or less, to a single iconographic type, the differences being only in respect of the colour of the goddess. The above two texts, it should be noted, do not have any description of the two handed form. The *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*, however, contains only one description of the goddess, and that too of her two-handed form.

Conze in his articles on the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā,¹ refers only to the descriptions contained in the *Sādhanamālā*. It was presumably not possible for him to refer in his article, published in autumn, 1949 and evidently written sometime earlier, to the description of the four-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā contained in

the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, published also in 1949. The descriptions of Prajñāpāramitā contained in the manuscripts of the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* and the *Ekallavīra-Canḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra* have not yet been utilised by any scholar. No textual description of Prajñāpāramitā possessing more than four hands has yet been noticed although we often come across some possible representations of the goddess with more than four hands.

II

In respect of colour the two-handed images of Prajñāpāramitā may be divided into three basic types : (a) the white (*śukla* or *sita*), (b) the yellow (*Pīta*, *Kanaka*, or *Suvarṇa*) and (c) the blue (*nīla*). This type is recognized only in the *Ekallavīra-Canḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*. The *Sādhanamālā* recognizes only the white and yellow forms of the goddess in her two-handed aspect. There are three *Sādhana*s in the *Sādhanamālā* describing the white form of the two-handed image of Prajñāpāramitā. In *Sādhana* No. 151 of the *Sādhanamālā*, we have:

The goddess Prajñāpāramitā is two-armed, one-faced, white in colour and beautiful in appearance. She has all sorts of ornaments and half-curly hair. She sits on a white lotus in the *vajraparyāṅka* attitude. She carries in the right hand the red lotus, and in the left hand the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book. She is stamped with (the image of) Akṣobhya (on the crown).

No. 155 of the *Sādhanamālā*, ascribed to the authorship of Paṇḍita Śrīpadma-varddhana, also gives almost a similar description:

The goddess (Prajñāpāramitā) possesses one face, two hands and curly black hair. She sits in the *paryāṅkāsa* and her lips, palms and soles are all red in colour. She wears all sorts of ornaments and white garments. She holds in her right hand a red lotus having a stalk and in the other hand (the left hand) she holds the book placed near the breast.

According to No. 154 of the *Sādhanamālā*:

The goddess (Prajñāpāramitā) is two handed, single-faced and white in colour. Her form follows the prescriptions of the Scriptures. She wears a crown of jewels. Her two hands which are disposed in the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* also hold two lotuses decked with the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book rising from her right and left sides. She sits on a white lotus in the *vajraparyāṅka* attitude and she is full of vigour with the freshness of youth. She is adorned with artistic dress and ornaments.

There are altogether five *sādhana*s (Nos. 152, 153, 157-9) in the *Sādhanamālā*

describing the two-handed form of the yellow (*pīta-* or *Kanaka-varṇa*) Prajñāpāramitā. It is to be mentioned in this connection that in these *sādhana*s, the words *pīta* and *kanaka* seem to have been used as synonyms. Although the *sādhana*s Nos. 152 and 158 describe the goddess as '*pītavarṇā*', i. e., yellow in colour, the colophons of these two *sādhana*s read: *kanaka-varṇaprajñāpāramitāsādhanaṃ*', indicating that '*pītavarṇa*' and '*kanakavarṇa*' mean the same colour, namely yellow.

Sādhana No. 152 of the *Sādhana-mālā* gives the following description of the two-handed form of yellow Prajñāpāramitā:

Prajñāpāramitā is yellow in colour, and possesses two hands and one face. She has the five tathāgatas (the Dhyānī Buddhas) on her crown. She sits in the *candrāsana* (i.e., *padmāsana*)² on a double-petalled lotus and possesses all ornaments and clothes. Her hands show the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* and on her right and left sides there are two lotuses, each containing the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book on it.

Sādhana No. 159, ascribed to the authorship on Ācārya Asaṅga (*kṛitiriyam ācāryyāsaṅgapādānām*), gives almost the same iconographic description:

Prajñāpāramitā is yellow (*kanakavarṇa*) in colour and is beautiful in appearance. Her entire body is adorned with the effigies of the Tathāgatas. She shows the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* and two lotuses, each of them having the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book on it, rising from her right and left sides. She holds (the figures of) five Dhyānī Buddhas on her crown and she is surrounded by the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas. She sits on a double-petalled lotus.

Sādhana No. 153 also describes the yellow form of two-handed Prajñāpāramitā but this description differs from the above-mentioned ones in iconographic details:

Prajñāpāramitā is yellow in colour, bears the image of Akṣobhya on her crown of matted hair (*jaṭāmukuta*), wears celestial ornaments and dress which include silken veil. Her hands display the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* and she bears on her left side a lotus with the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book on it.

An almost identical description of Prajñāpāramitā is found in *sādhana* Nos. 157 and 158.

(a) *Sādhana* No. 157:

The devotee should conceive of Prajñāpāramitā as yellow in colour, as two-handed and as seated in *Vajraparyāṅkāśana*. She wears artistic ornaments and dress and her hands disposed in the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*. She bears in her left hand a blue lotus with a book (apparently the *prajñāpāramitā*-Book) on it. The

expression of the goddess is singularly amorous.

(b) *Sādhana* No. 158:

(The goddess) Prajñāpāramitā should be conceived as yellow in colour, seated in *vajraparyāṅkāśana* on a double-petalled lotus, and as two-handed and single faced. She should show the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*, should wear all ornaments and garments and a crown of jewels. She should hold in her left hand the *Prajñāpāramitā-Book* placed on a lotus. The *Ekallavīra-Canḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra* contains a very significant description of the two-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā with blue colour. The description is as under:³

The Lord said : Now I shall tell about Prajñāpāramitā who is blue in colour, sixteen years of age, seated in the *sattvaparyāṅkāśana* and is stamped with (the figure of) Akṣobhya (on the crown). She holds in the right and left hands respectively a red and a blue lotus on each of which rests a book on *Kāmaśāstra* (a book on love and erotics). She has youthful breasts, large eyes and pleasant speech.

III

It has already been stated that at present we know of five textual descriptions of the four-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā. Out of these, three occur in the manuscript of the *Dharmakośa-Saṃgraha* and one each in the *Sāadhanamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. Except for the description found in the *Sāadhanamālā*, the four others convey more or less the same iconographic concept of the goddess, notwithstanding the variations in the body-colour of the goddess. The four-handed forms of Prajñāpāramitā are of two types, so far as the colour of the goddess is concerned : golden (*kanakavarṇā*, *kanakakāntī*, *jāmbūnadavarṇā* or *suvarṇavarṇojjvalā*), i.e., yellow, and white (*Śvetā*).

The white form of four-handed Prajñāpāramitā is neither described in the *Sāadhanamālā* nor in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. This form is described only in the *Dharmakośa-Saṃgraha* twice (see texts in *TBIS*, pp. 33, 34):

(1) Prajñāpāramitā has four hands and one face. She is white in colour. She exhibits the *dharmacakra-mudrā*, i.e., the gesture of exposition (evidently with two of her hands) and holds the rosary and the book in the (remaining) right and left hands respectively.

(2) Prajñāpāramitā is white in colour. She possesses the six ornaments,⁴ and she has one face. Her hands show the *dharmacakra-mudrā*, the rosary and the book of knowledge.

Although the passage quoted above does not categorically enumerate the hands of Prajñāpāramitā, the indirect allusion to the number of the hands of the goddess is quite obvious. That the goddess exhibits the *dharmacakra-mudrā*, which undoubtedly engages two of her hands, and a rosary and a book, evidently in the other two hands, shows that the conception is of the four-handed form of the goddess.

The golden, i.e., yellow form of four-handed Prajñāpāramitā is described in the *Sādhana-mālā*, the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* and the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha*. *Sādhana* No. 156 of the *Sādhana-mālā* gives the following description of the four-handed form of golden, i.e., yellow, Prajñāpāramitā:

The goddess Prajñāpāramitā is to be conceived as having a crown of matted hair, four hands and one face. Two of her hands should be in *dharmamudrā* (*dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā*), and she should be adorned with ornaments of manifold jewels. Her colour should be as luminous as gold. She should wear artistic garments including a veil. Her left hand should hold a blue lotus with the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book on it, and her right hand should show the *abhaya-mudrā*. She should sit on a red lotus in *vajraparyāṅkāśana*.

In the *Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara-maṇḍala* of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, there is the following description of the four-handed form of golden (*kamaṇīyakanakakāntiḥ*) i.e., yellow Prajñāpāramitā: 'Prajñāpāramitā is of the delightful golden (i.e., yellow) colour. She holds the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book on a lotus and her (principal) hands are in the *dharmacakra-mudrā*.'

It is to be noted that although the above description may seem to relate to a two-handed form of the goddess, it actually pertains to her four-handed form as is evident from the context. The above-quoted description of Prajñāpāramitā occurs in the context of the iconographical description of the twelve *pāramitā* goddesses of which Prajñāpāramitā is one. It is stated there that all the twelve *pāramitā* goddesses are two-handed: their right hand holding the *cintāmaṇi*-banner and the left showing their respective characteristic emblem, but only Prajñāpāramitā possesses two hands extra (*dvādaśpāramitā dvidhujāḥ savyena cintāmaṇidhvajaṃ sva sva cihnadharāḥ, prajñāpāramitā tyadhika-karadvayā*). Thus the reference here is definitely to a four-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā. In the description of Prajñāpāramitā it is found that her two hands are disposed in the *dharmacakra-mudrā*. As a matter of fact, the hand which is enjoined to hold the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book on lotus is probably her left hand which is supposed to show the characteristic emblem of the goddess, and the right hand of the goddess, about which the relevant text is silent, is evidently required to hold the *cintāmaṇi*-banner, the usual right-hand attribute of all the twelve *pāramitā* goddesses.

A detailed description of the four-armed variety of Prajñāpāramitā occurs in the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha*, which is as under (see for the text, *TBIS*, p. 34):

Now follows the description (*dhyāna*) of Prajñāpāramitā and the explanation

of her name. The goddess has one face and golden colour. She possesses the ornaments like the wheel (*cakra*), the earring (*kuṇḍala*), the torque (*kaṇṭhī*), the bracelet (*rucaka*), the girdle (*mekhalā*), and the anklet (*nūpura*). She has four hands of which a pair of right and left hands show the *dharmacakra-mudrā* and the other two hands hold the rosary and the book. Her breasts are elevated. She sits in the *vajrāsana* on a lotus.

IV

We have now taken note of all the so-far available textual description of Prajñāpāramitā. These descriptions, it is found, prescribe for the images of the goddess three colours: yellow, white and blue. Among these colours, yellow (or golden colour) seems to be the widely accepted colour for the goddess. As many as eight *sādhana*s prescribe this colour for Prajñāpāramitā, both in her two-handed and four-handed forms. White is the other preferred colour, both for the two and four-handed forms. The number of *sādhana*s describing the goddess as white is five. The other colour, blue, is mentioned only once, and that only for two-handed form of the goddess.

It is not clear if there is any symbolic meaning for these colours. Bhattacharyya tried to explain the complexions of the deities as indications of the same of their parental Buddhas. This theory does not go too far since many deities are found to be related to more than one Dhyānī Buddha. But it should be mentioned in this connection that on folio 25a of the manuscript of the *Ekallavīra-Canḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*, we at least find an explanation of the significance of blue, white and yellow colours. It is stated there that the blue colour stands for pure knowledge of Dharmadhātu (*nīlaḥ suviśuddhadharmadhātujñānam*), the white colour for the ideal knowledge (*śveta ādarśajñānam*), and the yellow colour for the knowledge of equality (*pīta samatājñānam*). It is stated there that this mode of colour-significance is applicable both for the gods and the goddesses (*yathā bhagavatām tathā bhagavatīnām*). In the same work, Prajñāpāramitā is referred to as the Supreme Female Principle (*strīrūpabhāvanā Prajñāpāramitā prakīrtitā*)⁵ since she is regarded there as the female counterpart of Caṇḍaroṣaṇa himself (*māyādevīsutaścāhaṁ caṇḍaroṣaṇatām gataḥ|tvameva bhagavatī gopā prajñāpāramitātmikā||*).⁶ It is hence quite natural that the colour-significance explained in this work would also relate to Prajñāpāramitā, more so because the colours have been explained with reference to knowledge (*jñānam*) of which Prajñāpāramitā is the deified embodiment.

That the composers of *sādhana*s were very much conscious of the aspect of knowledge (*jñāna*), of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is evident from the fact that the goddess in all of her textual descriptions is associated with a book. The usual words used to denote such a book are *pustaka*, *prajñā-pustaka*, *prajñāpāramitā-pustaka*, or simply *prajñāpāramitā*. In the description of Prajñāpāramitā, contained in the *Ekallavīra-Canḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*, the goddess is associated with a book, but the book there is not the usual *prajñā-pustaka* or *Prajñāpāramitā-pustaka*.

(the book of knowledge *par excellence*), but a book on love and erotics (*Kāmasāstra*). The replacement of the *prajñā-pustaka* with the *Kāmasāstra* is no doubt very interesting because it marks a significant innovation in the very concept of the goddess. Prajñāpāramitā is regarded as the divine manifestation of highly philosophical or rather metaphysical concept. The *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra* of course, retains this concept of the goddess, but, at the same time, seems to add to it some element of esoterism by bringing the goddess into the realm of love and erotics (*kāma*) around which all sorts of tāntric mysticism flourished.

The knowledge (*jñāna*) aspect of Prajñāpāramitā is also symbolised by the lotus (*padma* or *kamala*), another usual attribute in the hand of the goddess. The lotus is symbolic of the entire pool of knowledge, and the petals stand for its various branches. Another iconographic indication of the knowledge aspect of Prajñāpāramitā is probably conveyed by the *dharmacakra-pravartanamudrā* (the gesture of exposition), with which the goddess is almost always associated. It has been pointed out by S. K. Saraswati that the *dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā* (known also as *dharmacakra-mudrā*, *dharma-mudrā* or *vyākhyāna-mudrā*) is a composite *mudrā*, because it is the combination of the *Jañāna-mudrā* (expressed by the touching of the chest with the left hand) and the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* (expressed by the typical hand-pose in which the arm is raised showing the palm and the tip of the index finger touching the tip of the thumb).⁷ As the *dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā* combines the elements of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *vyākhyāna* (exposition), there could not be any other better hand-pose (*mudrā*), other than this, for Prajñāpāramitā, as the embodiment of knowledge *par excellence*, who is also supposed to be the supreme authority to expose and explain correctly all the subtleties of divine knowledge.

It is noteworthy that in the *sādhana*, Prajñāpāramitā is almost always conceived as seated, though, of course, there are a few instances where the description is not explicit as to whether it refers to a seated or a standing image concept of the goddess. But it is significant that in none of the textual accounts the goddess is categorically described as standing. The usual sitting posture assigned to Prajñāpāramitā is the celebrated *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, the only exception, however, is found in the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra* which assigns to the goddess the *sattva-paryāṅkāśana*, a variation of the former mode of sitting.

The most noteworthy feature of the iconographic description of Prajñāpāramitā is that in none of the descriptions the goddess is assigned more than one face, although the multiplicity of the faces of the gods and goddesses is a veritable peculiarity of tāntric Buddhist iconography. Another point to be noted is that unlike all other later Buddhist gods and goddesses, Prajñāpāramitā is not assigned any *vāhana* (mount).

V

One very interesting feature of the Buddhist pantheon is that all gods and goddesses belonging to this pantheon have their respective parental Dhyānī

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Buddhas. In his book, *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, Bhattacharyya has put forward the theory that the colours of the Buddhist deities are indicative of their respective parental Dhyānī Buddhas, because each Dhyānī Buddha has a special colour and that colour is required to be shown by all deities originating from each.⁸ But this theory of Bhattacharyya does not seem to hold good in respect of the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā whose parental Dhyānī Buddha is stated to be Akṣobhya even when the colour of the goddess is white (as in the *sādhana* No. 151 of the *Sādhana-mālā*) or yellow (as in the *sādhana* No. 153), or blue (as in the description of the goddess found in the manuscript of the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*). The body-colour of the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya is blue (*nīla* or *mecaka*), both according to the *Sādhana-mālā* and the *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*.⁹ So the goddess Prajñāpāramitā as an emanation of the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya should be only of blue colour, if the theory of Bhattacharyya had general applicability. But from the textual descriptions of the goddess it appears that her blue form is comparatively rare and probably later in origin than her forms with other colours. Moreover, it is found that in the texts the goddess is stated to be white or yellow in colour even when the name of her parental Dhyānī Buddha, i.e., Akṣobhya, is categorically mentioned, e.g., in the *sādhana*s Nos. 151 and 153 of the *Sādhana-mālā*. Thus it appears that practically there was no hard and fast rule that the colour of the Buddhist deities should follow that of their respective parental Dhyānī Buddhas.

It is also noteworthy that in some of the descriptions of Prajñāpāramitā, the Dhyānī Buddha of the goddess is not mentioned. In none of the descriptions of the four-handed forms of the goddess, there occurs the name of her parental Dhyānī Buddha. Moreover, the *Sādhana-mālā* describes some two-handed forms of Prajñāpāramitā (e.g., the *sādhana*s Nos. 154, 155, 157, 158) without the mention of her parental Dhyānī Buddha. The colour of the goddess in these forms is stated to be white (*sādhana*s 154 and 155) or yellow (*sādhana*s 157 and 158). The four-handed forms of the goddess have also these two colours. But we have already seen above that the colour of the deities is no definite clue to the colour, as such the identity, of their respective parental Dhyānī Buddhas. Thus we are neither in a position to ascertain the identity of the parental Dhyānī Buddha with whom the above-mentioned forms of Prajñāpāramitā are to be associated, nor able to explain the non-mention of the parental Dhyānī Buddha of those forms of the goddess.

Although one could be tempted to interpret the silence regarding the Dhyānī Buddhas in the description of some of the forms of Prajñāpāramitā as indicative of an earlier origin of the concept of those forms than that of the others, and even than that of the Dhyānī Buddhas, it should be borne in mind that the silence regarding the Dhyānī Buddha in the description cannot be the only criterion for ascertaining the anteriority of the described form of the goddess. Such an ascription of a chronological significance to the silence regarding the Dhyānī Buddhas will have its own contradiction if viewed from a larger perspective. No description of the four-handed forms of Prajñāpāramitā refers to the parental Dhyānī Buddha. This alone cannot sufficiently prove that all these forms originated earlier than the two-handed forms of the goddess the descriptions of which often have the mention

of the Dhyānī Buddha concerned.

The earliest textual description of Prajñāpāramitā is probably contained in the *sādhana* No. 159 of the *Sāadhanamālā* which is ascribed to the authorship of Asaṅga who belonged to circa A.D. 300. The *sādhana* No. 152 of the *Sāadhanamālā* probably also belongs roughly to the same period, because it contains almost a similar description of the goddess. In both the *sādhana*s, Prajñāpāramitā is described as having on her crown all the five Dhyānī Buddhas (*pañcatathāgatamakuṭā* or *makuṭī*). Thus it seems that Prajñāpāramitā is associated with the Dhyānī Buddhas as early as circa A.D. 300, which is also the date assigned to the *Guhyasamāja-Tantra*¹⁰ in which for the first time the idea of the five Dhyānī Buddhas was introduced to form a well-defined pantheon. As a matter of fact, it would be wrong to think that the *sādhana*s which do not mention the parental Dhyānī Buddha of Prajñāpāramitā were composed prior to the origin of the concept of the Dhyānī Buddhas.

Now it appears that the various forms of Prajñāpāramitā described in the texts admit of a classification into three categories: (a) the form with the five Dhyānī Buddhas on the crown (*sādhana*s, 152 and 159), (b) the form with the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya on the crown (the *sādhana*s, 151 and 153, and description of the goddess found in the manuscript of the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*) and (c) the form without the mention of the Dhyānī Buddha (*sādhana*s, 154-158 and all other descriptions of the four-handed form of the goddess). These three forms, it appears, probably present three stages in the evolution of the various image concepts of Prajñāpāramitā. We should, however, bear in mind that these three stages do not necessarily represent the three successive stages. It seems that the order of succession in the different stages of evolution of the image concept of Prajñāpāramitā might have been as follows: (a) In the first stage the goddess was conceived as an emanation of all the five Dhyānī Buddhas. (b) In the second stage, the previous conception was retained, but, in the description, the Dhyānī Buddhas are not mentioned simply because their association with the goddess was by that time well-known and, as such, taken for granted. (c) In the third stage, the goddess is associated with one particular Dhyānī Buddha, namely, Akṣobhya, instead of the five; this change leads also to a formal change in the iconographic concept of the goddess. (d) In the fourth stage, the preceding iconographic concept is retained without any basic change, but in the description, the parental Dhyānī Buddha is not mentioned probably because Akṣobhya's association with the goddess was by that time well recognized, and hence was taken for granted; in this stage probably the four-handed form of the goddess also was conceived.

The above analysis of the different stages in the evolution of the image-concepts of Prajñāpāramitā and the sequential arrangement of the stages may appear to be highly assumptive. But a critical examination of the textual descriptions of the goddess admits of such an analysis. That at the initial stage Prajñāpāramitā was conceived as an emanation of all the five Dhyānī Buddhas is borne out by her description as possessing the five Dhyānī Buddhas on her crown (*pañcatathāgatamakuṭā*) in the *sādhana* No. 159 of the *Sāadhanamālā*, which seems to be

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the earliest of all available descriptions of Prajñāpāramitā. In this *sādhana*, the goddess is conceived as the 'Mother of all the Buddhas', and this supreme concept of the goddess probably led Asaṅga, the earliest author to describe her iconography, to associate her not with any particular Dhyānī Buddha but with all the five of them. That Asaṅga had actually in mind the very supreme nature of the goddess is evident from : (a) his description of Prajñāpāramitā as wearing a crown of all the five Dhyānī Buddhas (*pañcatathāgatamakuṭā*); (b) his characterisation of the goddess as having on her body, the effigies of Tathāgatas as adornments (*sarvāṅge tathāgataiḥ kṛitālaṅkāra*) and as surrounded by the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas (*Buddhabodhisattvapariṇṛitā*).

Sādhana No. 152, not ascribed to any author, contains a description of Prajñāpāramitā which is almost similar to that composed by Asaṅga. But this *sādhana* seems to be of later date, since the goddess in it is also associated with all the five Dhyānī Buddhas. Here she is neither described as being ornamented by the Buddhas nor as having the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas as her associates. Moreover, unlike the description given by Asaṅga, this *sādhana* explicitly states the number of faces and hands of the goddess,¹¹ and also her sitting position.¹² Thus it seems that this *sādhana* (No. 152), being more explicit but less emotional, may be later than that composed by Asaṅga.

Probably, still later was composed *sādhana* No. 154, which even without any reference to the Dhyānī Buddhas, contains the iconographic description of Prajñāpāramitā, conforming in major points to that given in the two *sādhana*s already mentioned. The silence regarding the Dhyānī Buddhas is no doubt significant, but the reason for such a silence is not far to seek. The association of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā with the five Dhyānī Buddhas being well recognized by the time of the composition of the *sādhana* No. 154, the composer of the *sādhana* probably did not think it imperative on his part to be explicit about the established association. But the description of the goddess as '*āgamādhigamarūpā*' (i.e., having the form as recognized by the scriptures) in this *sādhana* presumably shows that the composer of the *sādhana* had the knowledge of the concept of the pristine form of the goddess (as contained in the *sādhana* No. 159 or 152), including the association of the five Dhyānī Buddhas with the form.

Whatever might be the actual reason, the silence regarding the Dhyānī Buddhas is no doubt very significant inasmuch as the *sādhana* No. 154 also seems to contain some element of change in the iconographic concept of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā. It describes Prajñāpāramitā as white (*śuklā*) in colour, whereas the earlier ones (*sādhana*s 152 and 159) refer to the goddess as yellow (*pīṭavarṇā* or *kanakavarṇā*) in colour, although all the three *sādhana*s prescribe for the goddess the same hand-pose (e.g., the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*) and the similar attributes in the hands (viz., the lotus with the *Prajñāpāramitā*-Book on it, in the right and left hands). As *sādhana* No. 154 is silent about the Dhyānī Buddhas and contains some prescriptive change regarding the body-colour of the goddess, it seems to represent a transitional stage in the evolution of the iconographic concept of Prajñāpāramitā from her original form having association with the five Dhyānī Buddhas to a forthcoming form

associated with only one particular Dhyānī Buddha, namely, Akṣobhya. The change in the colour of the goddess from yellow to white probably came in the wake of the transition, not actually as an aberration, but as an innovation.

This period of transition appears to be of short duration after which Prajñāpāramitā was associated with only one Dhyānī Buddha. This was probably done simply to avoid any confusion and to maintain the uniformity of the procedure that each of the gods and goddesses, belonging to the pantheon, should have as his or her respective sire (kuleśa) one of the five Dhyānī Buddhas. In associating Prajñāpāramitā with a particular Dhyānī Buddha the choice seems to have fallen on Akṣobhya possibly for one or other of the following reasons.

(a) Mañjuśrī, the Buddhist god of wisdom, is affiliated sometimes with all the five Dhyānī Buddhas (e.g., his Vāgīśvara, Mañjuvajra and Siddhaikavīra forms), sometimes only with Amitābha (e.g., his Vajrarāga and Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara forms), and sometimes with Akṣobhya (e.g., his Mañjughoṣa, Siddhaikavīra, Vajrāṇaṅga and Nāmasaṅgīti forms).¹³ The association of the Siddhaikavīra form of Mañjuśrī both with the five Dhyānī Buddhas as well as with Akṣobhya is very significant. In one *sādhana* of the *Sādhana-mālā*, this form of the god is described as '*pañcavirakeśaraḥ*' (having the five Dhyānī Buddhas on the crest) as well as having the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya on the crown (*bhagavato maulau Akṣobhyaṁ*).¹⁴ These two descriptive expressions, taken together, convey the idea that the god in this particular form should have on his crown all the five Dhyānī Buddhas, the central position being occupied by Akṣobhya. That among the five Dhyānī Buddhas, Akṣobhya is here given some special importance is significant, inasmuch as it probably anticipates the evolution of the forms of Mañjuśrī (namely, the Mañjughoṣa, Vajrāṇaṅga and Nāmasaṅgīti forms) associated exclusively with Akṣobhya. From the study of the textual descriptions of the various forms of Mañjuśrī it appears that the number of the forms of god with exclusive association with the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya is more than that of the others. Thus it seems that for some reason or other, the association of Mañjuśrī with Akṣobhya became more popular than with any other Dhyānī Buddha. It is possible that when the composers of the *sādhana*s thought of ascribing to Prajñāpāramitā, the goddess of wisdom—and as such the female counterpart of Mañjuśrī, a particular Dhyānī Buddha, their choice fell on the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya; the logic behind such a choice is to be looked for in a probable exigency to rationalise the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā with that of her male counterpart. This would, however, presuppose that Prajñāpāramitā was associated with Akṣobhya after the latter's association with Mañjuśrī was well recognized in the pantheon.

(b) Advaya-vajra, the author of the *Advaya-vajra-Saṁgraha*, says that the four Dhyānī Buddhas: Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi, Vairocana, and Ratnasambhava have on their crown the stamp of a miniature Akṣobhya. Advaya explains this fact by stating that the other four Dhyānī Buddhas cannot be known without Akṣobhya or *Vijñāna*.¹⁵ Thus it appears that Advaya-vajra singles out and attaches some special importance to the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya. It is not unlikely that following Advaya-vajra's theory, and by virtue of his being the embodiment of the *skandha* (cosmic element) of *vijñāna* (wisdom), the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya was considered

as the fittest to be recognized as the *kuleśa* (i.e., the Parental Dhyānī Buddha) of Prajñāpāramitā, the goddess of wisdom (*viññāna*). But this should not mean that the association of Prajñāpāramitā with Akṣobhya took place not much earlier than circa A.D. 978, the earlier date ascribed to Advayavajra.¹⁶

(c) The theory of the Ādi-Buddha originated in the Nālandā Monastery about the beginning of the 10th century A.D., and was accepted first in the Kālacakrāyāna,¹⁷ a later form of Vajrayāna Buddhism. According to this theory of the Ādi-Buddha, one of the Dhyānī Buddhas is believed to be the principal or the Ādi-Buddha.¹⁸ Even today the Buddhists of Nepal are divided into different sects, some regarding Amitābha as the Ādi-Buddha, and others acknowledging either Vairocana or Akṣobhya as the Ādi-Buddha.¹⁹ It is hence quite possible that the *sādhana*s which mention the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya as the *kuleśa* (parental Dhyānī Buddha) of Prajñāpāramitā were composed for and even by the people who regarded Akṣobhya as the Ādi-Buddha. The acceptance of this theory would, however, lend us to believe that the selection of the Dhyānī Buddha of a particular god or goddess was dependent on the worshipper's recognition of a particular Dhyānī Buddha as the Ādi-Buddha.

(d) The association of Tārā with Akṣobhya is as old as the *tantras*. In some tāntric treatises, like the *Toḍalatantra* and the *Śaktisaṅgamatantra*, Akṣobhya is put down as a synonym for Śiva and Tārā as a synonym for Śakti.²⁰ It is interesting to note that some of the tāntric treatises, e.g., the *Tārārahasya Vṛttikā*, refer to a particular form of Tārā as Prajñāpāramitā.²¹ It has already been pointed out that the Buddhists also regarded Prajñāpāramitā as a form of their supreme goddess Tārā.²² In choosing a particular Dhyānī Buddha for their goddess Prajñāpāramitā, the Buddhists probably followed the tāntric traditions and selected Akṣobhya as the *kuleśa* (sire) of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, who by virtue of her being a form of Tārā might have had already been potentially associated with Akṣobhya.

Whatever might be the reason for the acceptance of Akṣobhya as the parental Dhyānī Buddha of Prajñāpāramitā, we find that there evolved as many as three iconographic concepts of the goddess with Akṣobhya as the parental Dhyānī Buddha. These three forms are: (a) the yellow (*pīta*) form as described in *sādhana* No. 153 of the *Sāadhanamālā*, (b) the white (*śukla*) form as described in *sādhana* No. 151 of the *Sāadhanamālā*, and (c) the blue (*nīla*) form as described in the *Ekallavīra-Cāṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*.

We have seen that Prajñāpāramitā in her pristine concept was yellow in colour. As a matter of fact, the first of the above-mentioned three forms seems to retain the original colour-concept of the goddess. The second represents a change in the colour of the goddess from yellow to white, and that the indication of this forthcoming change was already there in *sādhana* No. 154 of the *Sāadhanamālā* has been discussed earlier. The introduction of the blue colour of the goddess, no doubt a contribution of intense tantricism, has probably also some connection with an earlier concept. The *Svatantra-Tantra* refers to the Nīlasarasvatī form of the goddess Tārā.²³ We know that Prajñāpāramitā, a form of Tārā, is also a form of Sarasvatī in the sense that both of them represent deified knowledge. It is hence quite likely

that Nīlasarasvatī of the *Svatantra-Tantra* is the same as the blue form (*nīla*) prajñāpāramitā mentioned in the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*.

The Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya has blue colour. Naturally, as his emanation Prajñāpāramitā should also possess this colour. But in the *Sādhnamālā* we do not find any attempt to rationalise the body-colour of Prajñāpāramitā with that of her Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya; it is interesting that the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra* not only does associate Prajñāpāramitā with the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya, but also associates the latter's body-colour (blue) to her. Thus it appears that the author of the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra* might have ascribed the blue colour to Prajñāpāramitā in order to rationalise the colour aspect of her iconography with that of her Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya.

We now refer to the next phase in the evolution of the iconic concept of Prajñāpāramitā. *Sādhana*s 155, 157 and 158 of the *Sādhnamālā* were probably composed in this phase. None of these *sādhana*s mentions the name of the parental Dhyānī Buddha of Prajñāpāramitā, although they seem to retain the same iconography of the goddess as the one with Akṣobhya as the parental Dhyānī Buddha. Except for the silence regarding the Dhyānī Buddha, the *sādhana* No. 155 is almost the same as the *sādhana* No. 151, whereas the *sādhana* Nos. 157 and 158 seem to follow the *sādhana* No. 153 of the *Sādhnamālā*. It appears that these three *sādhana*s (Nos. 155, 157, 158) were composed at a time, when the association of Prajñāpāramitā with Akṣobhya being well-known by that time, there was no need for any specific mention of the Dhyānī Buddha of the goddess; it was taken for granted.

It appears that after this stage, the *sādhana*s describing the four-handed forms of Prajñāpāramitā were composed, because none of them mentions the parental Dhyānī Buddha of the goddess, and as such they seem to belong to a period when the association of Prajñāpāramitā with the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya was well-known among the votaries. But it is very difficult to say anything precisely at the present state of our knowledge. It is not unlikely that some of the two-handed forms of the goddess might have been conceived simultaneously by various seers distinguished from one another in respect of creative thought, and also in their respective stations in time and space.

VI

Again it is very difficult to assign dates to the various forms of Prajñāpāramitā. It is of course certain that all the two-handed forms of the goddess, except her blue form described above, were conceived of before A.D. 1165, the latest date ascribed to the *Sādhnamālā*,²⁴ which contains descriptions of all those forms. The two-handed form of blue Prajñāpāramitā is not described in the *Sādhnamālā*; the only description of this form is to be found in the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*. In the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there are as many as five manuscripts of the last-mentioned work, two of them (Mss. G. 9965 and G. 9981) are dated in Newari Saṃvat 435 and 531 respectively. Thus at the present state of our knowledge, we

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can only say that the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra* originated not later than the Newari Saṃvat 435 (A.D. 1315). As a matter of fact, the origin of the concept of the two-handed form of blue Prajñāpāramitā can be roughly placed to a period between A.D. 1165 and A.D. 1315. In the *Sādhnamālā* only two *sādhanas* of Prajñāpāramitā contain the names of their authors. They are *sādhanas* Nos. 155 and 159; the latter is ascribed to the authorship of Asaṅga and the former to Padma-varddhana. The date of Asaṅga is roughly A.D. 300,²⁵ whereas the date of Padma-varddhana cannot be ascertained even approximately.

Considering the above facts, we can perhaps say that the iconic concepts of all the two-handed forms of Prajñāpāramitā, noticed from the textual descriptions, might have been evolved during the period ranging between A.D. 300 and A.D. 1300. The initial date of this period is known from Asaṅga's association with the authorship of one of the *sādhanas* of the goddess, while the latest date is indicated by the date of the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*, roughly belonging to circa A.D. 1300, and having the description of a form apparently of a later development.

The descriptions of the four-handed forms of Prajñāpāramitā are found in the *Sādhnamālā*, the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, and the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha*. We have not yet found any dated representation of the four-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā described in the *Sādhnamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. The *Sādhnamālā*, in its present compilation, may be roughly ascribed to A.D. 1165,²⁶ and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* to A.D. 1100.²⁷ So, at the present state of our knowledge, we can only say that the four-handed forms of Prajñāpāramitā, described in the *Sādhnamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, might have at least been known in A.D. 1165 and A.D. 1100 respectively.

The *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* was composed in the Newari Saṃvat 946 (A.D. 1826).²⁸ But it is interesting to note that although this work describes the four-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā thrice, the descriptions tend to resolve to one particular iconographic type, namely, the two main hands of the goddess disposed in the *dharmacakramudrā* and the remaining right and left hands holding the rosary (*japamālā*) and the book (*pustaka*) respectively. The goddess Prajñāpāramitā in this iconographic form is found to be illustrated in three dated manuscripts:

(a) *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* manuscript in the collection of Professor S.K. Saraswati of Calcutta,

(b) *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* manuscript No. Sansk. a.7(R), preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and

(c) *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript No.T.1055, belonging to the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University. The first is dated A.D. 1028, the second in the fifteenth year of Rāmapāla, which comes to about A.D. 1095,²⁹ and the third is dated in the Newari Era 225 (A.D. 1105). Thus we find that the four-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā described in the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* originated at least as early as A.D. 1028, if not still earlier.

In the light of the above discussion, we can conclude that all the concepts of the

four-handed forms of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, gleaned so far from textual accounts, originated between A.D. 1028 and A.D. 1165, although there is every possibility of the initial date being still earlier. But we should not emphasise this, because we know that in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* Mss., in the collection of the Cambridge University or of the Asiatic Society, dated respectively A.D. 1015 and A.D. 1071, the goddess Prajñāpāramitā is illustrated in her two-handed form, and there her four-armed form is not represented at all.

We should, however, remember that the variation in the iconographic concepts does not always necessarily have any chronological implication; there can be simultaneous rise and growth of different iconographic concepts of the same god or goddess at one particular place or at different places.

VII

From our study of the textual accounts of the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā we come to know that irrespective of colour, the iconographic forms of the goddess may be divided into following types:

TWO-HANDED FORMS

Type A I

The hands in the *dharmacakramudrā*; on the left and right sides two lotuses, each with a book on it; usually the five Dhyānī Buddhas on the crown. Described in the *sādhana*s 152, 154 and 159 of the *Sādhanamālā*.

Type A II

Hands in the *dharmacakramudrā*; a lotus containing a book rises from the left; there may be the effigy of the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya on the crown (as in *sādhana* No. 153). Described in *sādhana*s 153, 157 and 158 of the *Sādhanamālā*.

Type A III

A red lotus in the left hand, and a book in the right; the effigy of Akṣobhya may be on the crown (as in the case of *sādhana* 151). Described in the *sādhana*s 151 and 155 of the *Sādhanamālā*.

Type A IV

Right and left hands hold respectively red and blue lotuses, each having a book on it; Akṣobhya on the crown. Described in the *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-Tantra*.

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FOUR-HANDED FORMS

Type B I

Principal hands in the *dharmacakramudrā*; remaining left hand holds a blue lotus with a book on it, and the right hand shows the *abhayamudrā*. Described in *sādhana* 156 of the *Sādhanamālā*.

Type B II

Principal hands in the *dharmacakramudrā*; remaining right hand holds the *cintāmaṇi*-banner, and the left hand holds a book. Described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.

Type B III

Principal hands in the *dharmacakramudrā*; remaining right hand holds the rosary, and the left hand holds a book. Described in the manuscript of the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha*.

VIII

In order to show the relationship between the literary and artistic documents we have now to take note of all the representations of Prajñāpāramitā known so far. There are, no doubt, many images of the goddess preserved in different museums and private collections. It is not possible for any individual either to visit all these museums or to trace out, leave alone having an access to, all the private collections. The descriptions of the images of Prajñāpāramitā appearing in various books and journals help us much in this regard. But these descriptions, as Conze rightly observes, 'are already scattered in all kinds of publication, often difficult of access, and not always correct'.³⁰ Moreover, there are some problems often encountered in the identification of the images. The book and the gesture of teaching are no doubt two iconographic distinctiveness of Prajñāpāramitā. But these are not exclusive to Prajñāpāramitā alone; they are also sometimes the iconographic cognizance of the images of Cundā.³¹ Hence, it is not always possible to identify an image on the basis of these two features, unless there are other documentary evidences to support the same. In spite of these difficulties, it is possible to identify conclusively some of the representations of Prajñāpāramitā. In our discussion, reference will be made first to those for which we have definite textual corroboration.

TWO-HANDED IMAGES

Type A I

The iconographic motif of type AI is found to be faithfully illustrated in two images, one in metal and the other in stone, discovered from Nālandā. The former is preserved in the Nālandā Museum³² and the latter is now in a private collection of Calcutta (Plate 12).

Another image, probably belonging to this type of the goddess, is now preserved in the Indian Museum.³³ On the right side of the image there is a lotus with a book on it, and a similar lotus rises on the left side also. The left portion being broken it is not clear whether the left lotus had also a book on it as required by the textual description. Another point which is not clear is whether the hands showed the *dharmacakra-mudrā*, because both the hands are broken. But in all probability the hands were in the gesture of teaching. An image of Prajñāpāramitā in painting dated A.D. 1750 belonging to this iconographic motif is also found from Tibet.³⁴

Some Variations of Type A I

(a) An image almost similar to type A-I is illustrated in the Cambridge manuscript (No. Add. 1643) of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, dated A.D. 1015, the only variation being the absence of any book on either of the lotuses held by the goddess. That the goddess in the illustration is Prajñāpāramitā is doubtless, because in the accompanying inscription it is stated that it is the illustration of Prajñāpāramitā of the Gridhrakūṭa-parvata,³⁵ evidently the hill of that name in Rajgir in Bihar.

About this image Conze writes: 'Two lotuses rise on both right and left, the stalks twisted round the arms, with a book on top of each lotus.'³⁶ But there is, in fact, no book on the lotuses in this illustration. A careful observation of the manuscript illustration (Plate 13) would reveal this as well as another significant variation: the goddess is seated here not with the legs locked showing the soles of both the feet, but the legs placed one above the other, the sole of only one foot being visible. It is to be noted that in this illustration there are two attending figures also.

Although the identification of the goddess in the above illustration as Prajñāpāramitā is certain, we do not, however, possess any textual description of such a form of the goddess. But it is interesting to note that such a description is actually there in the manuscript of the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha*, but the name of the goddess for which the description is given is mentioned there not as Prajñāpāramitā, but as Dharmacakra-Tārā. The description is as follows: '*Ekamukhā dvibhujā dharmacakra-mudrā padmadvayaṃ*.'³⁷ As a form of Tārā, the most distinctive iconographic feature of Prajñāpāramitā is no doubt the *dharmacakra-mudrā*, and as such Prajñāpāramitā can well be characterised as Dharmacakra-Tārā. As a matter of fact, it is not unlikely that the above description of the *Dharmakoṣa-*

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Samgraha relates to a form of Prajñāpāramitā of the Cambridge manuscript under discussion.

In this context, it should be pointed out that the above description conforms to the basic iconographic features of the Mahāśrī Tārā images (Plate 14). However, the latter has the *lalitāsana* (one of the legs is pendant, while the other is bent in the usual position of the Buddha), instead of either the *vajraparyāṅka* or the *sattvaparyāṅka* mode of sitting.

(b) In the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there is also a manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* (No. A. 15) dated in the Newari Saṃvat 191 (A.D. 1071) which also has an illustration of Prajñāpāramitā of the Grīdhra-kūṭa hill.³⁸ The iconography of the goddess represented there is slightly different from that of the goddess illustrated in the Cambridge manuscript referred to above. The difference may be due to different interpretations, by the artists, of the iconographic theme. But because the difference is iconographically significant, the two illustrations have here been treated separately.

The goddess illustrated in A. 15 (Plate 11), like that in the Cambridge manuscript, is a two-handed deity having the hands disposed in the *dharmacakra-mudrā*. But unlike the one in the Cambridge manuscript, here she sits in the *vajraparyāṅkā-sana* and does not have any lotuses in either of the sides or hands. Moreover, here the goddess has four companions, instead of the two in the Cambridge manuscript illustration. It is also to be noted that a bronze image from Sumātrā shows the two-armed form of Prajñāpāramitā, with the gesture of teaching, but without either a lotus or a book.³⁹

Type A II

Almost every treatise on the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā reproduces, or at least refers to, the celebrated two-handed stone image of Prajñāpāramitā, dated roughly A.D. 1300, found from east Java and now preserved in the Rijksmuseum Voor Volkerkunde, Leiden, Holland. (Plate 15). There is a lotus with a book on it on her left side, and the stalk of the lotus entwines the left arm of the goddess whose hands are in the *dharmacakra-mudrā*.

Although no other image of this form of the goddess has yet come to our notice from India, it is interesting to note that the image described above tallies in basic iconographic points with type A II of Prajñāpāramitā found from textual description. The Leiden image, however, does not have the effigy of the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya on the crown as enjoined by *Sādhana* No. 152 of the *Sādhana-mālā*. The Leiden image of Prajñāpāramitā does not show the usual Indian type of the *dharmacakra-mudrā*. In India, this *mudrā* is usually shown as a combination of the *jñāna* and the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*, the left hand showing the former and the right the latter. But in the Leiden image, we find that the left hand of the goddess is not in the usual type of *jñāna-mudrā* (the combined tips of the thumb and the index finger touching the breast).⁴⁰

Type A III

No image conforming exactly to type A III has come to our notice from India proper. Alice Getty, however, refers to such a form of Prajñāpāramitā found from Cambodia, but the goddess she refers to is in the standing position.⁴¹ Coedes reproduces an image of Prajñāpāramitā, also from Cambodia, which is akin to the type referred to by Getty, but with an additional feature, namely, a figure of a Buddha in meditation (i.e., Amitābha) on the crown.⁴² According to the textual account, however type A III may have Akṣobhya, and not Amitābha, on the crest of the goddess.

Type A IV

No image exactly corresponding to A IV has yet been known to us. Clark reproduces the image of a form of two-handed Prajñāpāramitā in which the goddess is shown as having a book in each of her hands, but she is represented there not in the *sattvaparyāṅkāśana* but in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, and moreover, in Clark's illustration there is no effigy of any Dhyānī Buddha on the crown of the goddess.⁴³

FOUR-HANDED IMAGES

Four-handed forms of Prajñāpāramitā are commoner in art than the two-handed ones, though the textual descriptions are fewer. The five textual descriptions of the goddess in her four-handed forms refer to three iconographic types irrespective of colour. Of these, type B III seems to have been very popular and many representations corresponding exactly to the textual description have been found. Of types B I and II no representation exactly tallying with the text has been found. There is hardly any doubt, however, that iconic representations with minor variations of these types were also in existence.

Type B I

Type B I, according to Conze, is apparently not found amongst the images which have survived.⁴⁴ But Getty refers exactly to such a form, though of course, it is not clear from her statement whether her reference is to an image of Prajñāpāramitā or to a textual description of the goddess.⁴⁵

Possible representations of Type B I

(a) Clark, however, reproduces an image of four-handed (*caturbhujā*) Prajñāpāramitā, which has in the second right hand the *abhaya-mudrā* and in the second left hand a lotus with a book.⁴⁶ The identification of this image, based as it is on

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the accompanying inscription, is doubtless. But confusion arises with regard to the principal hands of the image, which are just held up side by side against the chest, and are not in the typical disposition of the *dharmacakra-mudrā*. In any way, we can conclude as Conze did: 'If this is not a new, otherwise unknown, ritual gesture, but a way of representing the gesture of teaching, we would have here the one four-armed image to carry out the instructions of the *Sādhnamālā*'.⁴⁷

It is interesting to note that a sculpture (Plate 16) found from Orissa represents a goddess with almost the same iconography, except that here her lower right hand shows the *varadamudrā* instead of the *abhaya*. The goddess represented here is probably Prajñāpāramitā because her principal hands are disposed in the *dharmacakra* pose, which is characteristic of the goddess of wisdom. It has to be pointed out that the gesture of the principal hands is of vital importance here, because had that pair of hands been in the *dhyānamudrā* with a pot, the iconographic motif would have answered the prescriptions of the *Sādhnamālā* (Nos. 129-131) for the goddess Cundā.

Type B II

No image conforming exactly to type B II has yet come to our notice. Tsuibikow, however, gives a reproduction of a Tibetan woodcut which almost agrees with the description, except that the right-hand attribute of the image is the *vajra* instead of the *cintāmaṇi*-banner.⁴⁸

Type B III

Representations of type B III of Prajñāpāramitā are found in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* manuscript, dated A.D. 1028, in the collection of Professor S. K. Saraswati of Calcutta,⁴⁹ the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, Bodleian Library (Oxford) manuscript No. Sansk. a. 7 (R), dated in the 15th year of Rāmapāla (which comes to circa A.D. 1095),⁵⁰ the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript (T. 1055), dated in the Newari Samvat 225 (A.D. 1105), now preserved in the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta (Plate 4). Similar illustrations of this form of the goddess are also known from several other manuscripts from Nepal.⁵¹ Many stone or metal images from Nepal and Tibet also bear this iconographic motif.⁵²

All the above-mentioned images, belonging to one iconographic motif, have been identified as the images of Prajñāpāramitā, whenever they have been referred to in any publication.⁵³ But these identifications had not been established by textual corroboration. We have already shown that in the manuscript of the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* the description of such a form of Prajñāpāramitā occurs thrice. In this connection a very interesting point deserves mention:

In Hinayāna, the Buddha occupied the first place among the three Jewels. The Mahāsāṅghikas gave him the second place, Dharma having the first. In Mahāyāna, the three Jewels became Prajñā, Upāya, and Bodhisattva, i.e., the

spiritualised forms of Dharma, Buddha, and Saṅgha. Transferred to stone or canvas Prajñā becomes a female deity, Upāya a male deity and Bodhisattva also a male deity.⁵⁴

In the shrine of Amitābha at the Svayambhu-caitya in Nepal, there is actually a female figure inscribed with the words: '*Dharmāya Namaḥ*'.⁵⁵ It is very interesting that one of the figures in the Trinity from Nepal, now in the House Shrine, Barkeley Galleries, London,⁵⁶ is not only female but possesses all the iconographic characteristics of type B III of Prajñāpāramitā. A similar Trinity with the same type of a figure for the image of Dharma is also reproduced by Bhattacharyya.⁵⁷

IX

OTHER POSSIBLE REPRESENTATIONS

In this section discussion will be made of a few other possible representations of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā. In each case the identification may be said to be tentative and, to a certain extent, hypothetical, as one cannot be sure in the absence of any textual or epigraphic corroboration. We leave out, of course, those instances in which the identification rests on much too flimsy grounds.

TWO-HANDED FORMS

(a) Conze refers to a description of a form of Prajñāpāramitā contained in a '*Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra* of a benevolent king' which was translated into Chinese in A.D. 750. According to this description, Prajñāpāramitā is golden yellow, sits cross-legged, and her left hand, near her heart, carries the book, while her right hand, near her breasts, makes the gesture of argumentation (*vitarka-mudrā*).⁵⁸ This type of Prajñāpāramitā is not found in Indian art nor do we even find any such description in Indian texts. It is, however, interesting that a statue in the Lama Temple in Peking corresponds to this description.⁵⁹

(b) Clark illustrates a form of two-handed Prajñāpāramitā⁶⁰ showing in the right hand the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* (the gesture of exposition) and the lotus in the left. Although there is no liturgical support for this form, the identification cannot be doubted as it is based on the accompanying inscription.

(c) In the *Garbhadhātu-maṇḍala* of the Shignon sect, a Prajñāpāramitā, with a sword as its only symbol, appears in the assembly of Ākāśagarbha.⁶¹ It is noteworthy that in a temple-picture from Tibet (plate 18) is represented a goddess, seated in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, having a flaming sword in her right hand and a lotus with a book on it in the left hand. Although the iconography of the deity exactly corresponds to that of Arapacana Mañjuśrī,⁶² the represented figure is of a female. As such it may well be taken to be the image of Prajñāpāramitā. It may be mentioned that there are other instances also of the iconographic forms of

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Mañjuśrī being similar to those of Prajñāpāramitā, and *vice versa*, e.g., the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā, discussed under type A I, is very much similar to that of the Mañjuvara form of Mañjuśrī.⁶³

(d) Visser describes a form of Prajñāpāramitā found from Tibet, and now in Dr. H.E. Tankink collection, Amsterdam.⁶⁴ From his description it appears that the goddess is seated in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana* and she holds in her left hand a lotus supporting a book and in the uplifted right hand she carries a pearl, perhaps the 'bindu'. But Conze objects to the image being identified as that of Prajñāpāramitā on two grounds: First, that it is not, according to him, the representation of a feminine deity, and second, that the pearl (*bindu*) and the book, the two attributes of the image concerned, being also attributes of Mañjuśrī, the image should more appropriately be identified as that of Mañjuśrī.⁶⁵ The first point of objection raised by Conze is serious. If the image is not at all a representation of a female form, then it cannot be a form of Prajñāpāramitā. But the actual image has to be examined carefully before drawing any final conclusion.

(e) Conze also refers to a statue, evidently of a female figure, from Java, with a Buddha image on the crown; her right hand holds a rosary, and the left a book without a lotus.⁶⁶ But it should be remembered that the book and rosary are not the exclusive attributes of Prajñāpāramitā; they are also to be found in the images of Cundā. According to Conze, there is an effigy of a Dhyānī Buddha on the crown of the image concerned, but he is silent about the identity of the Dhyānī Buddha. The identification of the Dhyānī Buddha, we presume, can give us the clue to the identification of the goddess represented in the statue, because we know that Prajñāpāramitā is generally associated with the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣobhya, whereas Cundā is associated generally with Vairocana.⁶⁷

(f) In the Nālandā Museum, there is a metal image (No. S.T. 1051/00165) of a goddess seated in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana*. Her right hand is in the *jñāna-mudrā* and her left hand shows the *varada-mudrā*. It could be a representation of Prajñāpāramitā for its hand-gesture symbolising knowledge.

FOUR-HANDED IMAGES

(a) An illumination (Plate 19) in a Nepalese manuscript (dated A.D. 1750) of a *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha*, now preserved in the Cambridge University Library, shows a four-armed figure which has in the principal right hand a rosary⁶⁸ and the principal left hand rests on the lap and holds a pot. The remaining right and left hands hold respectively a *vajra*⁶⁹ and a book.

It is probable that this figure represents the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, because on the folio of the manuscript where the illustration occurs, the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-mantra* (*Oṃ namo bhagavatyai āryā-prajñāpāramitāyai etc.*) also commences. Clark reproduces an image of Prajñāpāramitā having similar iconography⁷⁰ and R. Linossier also refers to such an illustration on a Tibetan banner.⁷¹

(b) An almost similar type of iconography as above is to be found in several images found from Nālandā or Kurkihar in Bihar,⁷² the only point of variation

noticed in these images being the presence of the *varada-mudrā* (the boon-bestowing gesture) instead of the *vajra* in the hand. A beautifully preserved image with such an iconography (Plate 20) is found from Kurkihar in the Gaya district in Bihar. The image, dated in the 31st year of Mahīpālā (A.D. 1023), is now preserved in the Patna Museum (cat. No. 9696). The goddess in the image is represented as seated in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana*. Her principal right hand shows the *varada-mudrā*, and the principal left hand, which rests on the lap, holds a pot. The remaining right and left hands hold respectively the rosary and the lotus with a book on it.

MULTI-HANDED IMAGES

It has already been stated that the Indian Buddhist texts, explored so far, do not refer to any form of *Prajñāpāramitā* with more than four hands. Images of *Prajñāpāramitā* with more than four hands are also not found in India. Some female figures with more than four hands and having at least the book as one of her attributes have, of course, been found in India. But it has been found that those images are not of *Prajñāpāramitā*, in spite of the book being one of their attributes. Such images have been identified, with reference to textual or other corroborative evidence, as the images either of Vasudhārā,⁷³ or of the Pañcarakṣā goddess Mahāmāyūrī or Mahāsītavatī.⁷⁴ But from outside India, some possible representations of *Prajñāpāramitā* with more than four hands have been found. We have to refer here to some of those image-types.

SIX-HANDED IMAGES

A six-handed form of *Prajñāpāramitā* belonging to the Shingon sect of Japan has been referred to and illustrated by Conze.⁷⁵ The goddess in the illustration is seated in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, and her principal right and left hands show the *vyākhyāna-mudrā* (the gesture of exposition) and the book respectively. Of the four remaining hands, the upper right and left ones show a peculiar gesture in each of the hands by joining the tips of the thumb and the ring-finger. The lower right hand is in the *bhūmisparśa-mudrā* (the earth-touching gesture), and the lower left is simply placed on the lap.

We have already stated that in Indian Buddhist texts we do not find the description of any six-handed form of *Prajñāpāramitā*. The description of six-handed goddess with a book in hand is usually found with reference to the images of Vasudhārā.⁷⁶ But it is very interesting to note that in the manuscript of the *Vasudhārānāmaṣṭottaraśatakam* (Ms. No. B. 49 of the Asiatic Society) or in the manuscript of *Dhāraṇīs* (Cambridge Ms. Add. 1315) and *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha* (Cambridge Ms. Add. 1326), Vasudhārā is referred to as *Prajñāpāramitā* (*Prajñāpāramitā devī prajñāśrī buddhivardhanī*) and as holding the *cintāmaṇi* (magic gem) and the *Prajñāpāramitā* Book (*cintāmaṇi dharī devī prajñāpastakadhārīṇī*),⁷⁷ the two essential attributes of *Prajñāpāramitā* mentioned by the *Nīṣpannayogāvalī*. As a matter of fact, the images of Vasudhārā may possibly be taken, both

conceptually as well as iconographically, to be the images also of the goddess Prajñāpāramitā. From this point of view, the six-handed images of Vasudhārā, which we find many in India and for which there is also Indian textual corroboration, may be taken to be the representations of the six-handed form of Prajñāpāramitā as well. Conze informs that the concept of the six-handed Prajñāpāramitā in Japan was derived from India through China.⁷⁸ It is not unlikely that it was the image concept of six-armed Vasudhārā that had travelled from India through China to Japan and was recognised there as a form of Prajñāpāramitā due to the identical concepts existing between Prajñāpāramitā and Vasudhārā. It should, however, be mentioned that the Chinese *Dhāraṇīsamuccaya*, translated in about A.D. 1000, deals with a six-armed form of Prajñāpāramitā.⁷⁹

TEN-HANDED IMAGE

Conze refers to a ten-handed and four or five-headed stone image from Cambodia and now in Musée Guimet, Paris.⁸⁰ He has tentatively identified it as the image of Prajñāpāramitā, but has, at the same time, expressed doubt about the identification.⁸¹ In fact, it is not possible even to tentatively identify the image as that of Prajñāpāramitā, because the hands of the image are too broken to give an idea about the attributes of the hands. Moreover, from no source we are aware of the existence of the concept of a ten-armed form of the goddess.

TWELVE-HANDED IMAGE

Conze mentions a twelve-armed form of Prajñāpāramitā from Nālandā, but he is equally hesitant to draw any conclusion about the identification.⁸² He was right in expressing doubt about the identification. In fact, this image and several other sixteen-handed and eighteen-handed images have been quite convincingly identified by Lohuizen-de Leeuw as the images of Cundā,⁸³ even though the images concerned show the *dharmacakra-mudrā* and the book, the two important attributes also of the image of Prajñāpāramitā.

TWENTY-TWO-HANDED IMAGE

In Cambodia, a form of Prajñāpāramitā with eleven heads and twenty-two hands is found.⁸⁴ The goddess in such a form is represented either standing or seated, and interestingly on the crown of such an image a figure of Buddha in the *dhyāna-mudrā* (the meditating pose), obviously the figure of the Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha, is found.⁸⁵ The identification of these images is based on the inscription of the pedestal of one of these images, which reads, '*Vraḥ rūpa vraḥ prajñāpāramitā*' meaning : holy image of the holy perfection of wisdom.⁸⁶

Avalokiteśvara also has a similar image-concept. From Tibet images of Avalokiteśvara with twenty-two hands and eleven heads are often found.⁸⁷ The above-mentioned image-concepts, presumably, are the female version of the iconography of

Avalokiteśvara. The female counterpart of the latter is Tārā, who is same as *Prajñāpāramitā* as has been shown earlier. This seems to be the justification of the characterisation of the image, apparently of a form of Tārā, as the form of *Prajñāpāramitā*.

From our study of the various types of different forms of the images of *Prajñāpāramitā*, we know that it is extremely difficult to single out the images of *Prajñāpāramitā* from the store of images even of Buddhist goddesses; the presence of the book and the gesture of teaching (*dharmacakra-mudrā*) as attributes is not always a definite clue in this respect. Because these attributes are shared by several other Buddhist goddesses. We have already pointed out that the book is found to be an attribute even of Cundā, Vasudhārā, Sarasvatī, Mahāmāyūrī, and Mahāsitavatī. Not only that, images of Dhanāda-Tārā⁸³ (Plate 21) and of Māmaki⁸⁹ are also found to have the book as an attribute.

The *dharmacakra-mudrā* is also not exclusive to *Prajñāpāramitā*. Not only the book, but also this gesture is to be found in the multi-handed images of Cundā⁹⁰. In her twelve-handed form, the *Pañcarakṣā* goddess Mahāmantrānusāriṇī also exhibits the *dharmacakra-mudrā* with her two principal hands.⁹¹ Moreover, we already know that Mahāsrī Tārā as well as Dharmacakra-Tārā, also show this gesture. As a matter of fact, there is every chance of being misguided if we try to identify a particular female figure as an image of the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* simply because it holds a book or shows the gesture of teaching. In fact, in Buddhist iconography, if not in Indian iconography as such, no attribute or gesture is exclusive to any particular god or goddess. So it is not possible also to particularise the iconographic features of any god or goddess, or to suggest any formula for their identification. The safest way is to take the help of literary documents, and try to identify the image concerned with reference to the textual prescriptions.

But it is not altogether impossible to find out a few guiding principles for the identification of at least some forms of *Prajñāpāramitā*. It is found that if the image of a goddess is either two-handed or four-handed and if the image in question shows both the book as well as the *dharmacakra-mudrā*, then it is likely to be an image of *Prajñāpāramitā*. We do not know any other image-concept of a Buddhist goddess in which the book and the gesture of teaching occur simultaneously together with the image being either two- or four-handed. The book and the gesture of teaching no doubt occur simultaneously in the images of Cundā as has been already shown by Lohuizen de-Leeuw,⁹² but they never occur together in the two or four-handed forms of the goddess.

XI

We cannot conclude our discussion on the iconography of *Prajñāpāramitā* without referring to an unique illustration of the goddess along with ten other goddesses (Plate 23) on the back cover of an illuminated palm-leaf manuscript No. Sansk. a. 7 (R), (now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford) dated in the fifteenth year

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of Rāmapāla (i.e., last quarter of the eleventh century A.D.).

This unique illustration was first brought to notice by Stooke,⁹³ and later it was commented upon by other scholars as well.⁹⁴ At the centre of this cover illustration is represented Prajñāpāramitā seated in the *Vajraparyāṅkāśana*. The principal two hands of the goddess are disposed in the *dharmacakra-mudrā* while her remaining right and left hands hold a rosary and a book. That the central figure is that of Prajñāpāramitā is beyond doubt, because we already know that such a form of the goddess is described in the manuscript of the *Dharmakośa-Saṃgraha*. But the difficulty is with regard to the identification of the ten other images which are there in the two sides of the central figure. About these figures Stooke writes: 'To the right and left of the figure are listeners, two to the right and two to the left, namely, laymen and laywomen and probably Brahmā and Indra or two Bodhisattvas'.⁹⁵ But a careful examination does not approve of Stooke's identification.

In fact, a correct description of the illuminated manuscript cover seems to have been given by Deneck:

At the centre of the cover is Prajñāpāramitā, the personification of wisdom, and to whom the manuscript is dedicated. She is shown seated on the throne, making the teaching gesture, and holding her attributes, the rosary and the book. She is flanked by two rows of five seated goddesses, all holding the philosopher's stone (*Chintāmaṇi*) in the right hand, with the exception of the goddess on the extreme right who is making the gesture of favour with the right hand and holding the lotus stem in her left.⁹⁶

Now if we take into account the central figure of Prajñāpāramitā and the nine other accessory figures holding the *cintāmaṇi*, then there remains no difficulty in interpreting the panel as an illustration of the ten *pāramitā* goddesses. In the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* it is stated that the twelve *pāramitā* goddesses are two-handed, each having in their right hand the *cintāmaṇi*-banner and the respective emblem in the left (Plate 22); but Prajñāpāramitā possesses two additional hands (*dvādaśapāramitā dvibhujāḥ savyena cintāmaṇidhvajaṃ vāmena svasvacihnadharāḥ; Prajñāpāramitā tvadhikakaradvayā*).⁹⁷ The iconography of the central goddess illustrated on the manuscript cover does not correspond exactly to the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* description. But the prescription of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* corresponds very much with the iconography of the other goddesses illustrated on the manuscript cover under discussion, except, however, in only one respect. The number of the *pāramitā* goddesses is stated to be twelve in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, whereas on the manuscript cover there are altogether eleven figures, even if the figure on the extreme right, which is iconographically different from the other accessory figures, is taken into consideration. In fact, the *pāramitās* are usually ten in number, but the vajrayānists raised the number to twelve.⁹⁸ In the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the practice of a *pāramitā* (perfection) is prescribed for a particular *bhūmi* (spiritual sphere),⁹⁹ the position of Prajñāpāramitā is assigned in the sixth *bhūmi*.¹⁰⁰ As a matter of fact, it appears that the painter of the manuscript cover followed the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* tradition

not only about the number of the *pāramitās*, but also about the position of Prajñāpāramitā in the sixth stage,¹⁰¹ whereas she is placed in the seventh stage in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*.¹⁰² As the manuscript illustration seems to have been made following a tradition other than that contained in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, it is not unlikely that there would be some difference in the iconography of Prajñāpāramitā upheld by the two traditions. But the variation is minor; the upper right hand of the central figure in the illustration holds a rosary, whereas the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* prescribes the *cintāmaṇi*-banner for the upper right hand of Prajñāpāramitā. But it is of significance that regarding the iconography of the other *pāramitās* the manuscript illustration follows the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* prescription of the *cintāmaṇi* as their right hand attribute.

But even these minor variations are not to be ignored, specially because the manuscript under discussion and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* are not separated from each other by a long gap of time; in fact, they seem to be contemporaneous with each other. The manuscript is dated in the fifteenth year of Rāmapāla, whereas we know that Abhayākara Gupta, the author of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, was also a contemporary of Rāmapāla. The date of Abhayākara Gupta, and as such the date of his *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, is estimated to be between the fourth quarter of the eleventh and the first quarter of the twelfth century,¹⁰³ and the illuminated manuscript under discussion is a work of the fourth quarter of the eleventh century.¹⁰⁴

The female figure represented on the extreme right of the panel is also very interesting. From Deneck's description it appears that she has a lotus in her left hand and her right hand is in the gesture of favour (*varada-mudrā*).¹⁰⁵ Thus it seems to be an illustration of Khadiravaṇī Tārā who also has these features.¹⁰⁶ The representation of Khadiravaṇī Tārā in the panel of the *Pāramitā* goddesses no doubt is unusual. But it is not unlikely that the incorporation of this figure in the panel was due to the exigency, which the artist might have felt, to make the number of figures flanking the principal figure of Prajñāpāramitā equal.

Conze, however, refers to some Chinese and Tibetan texts in which there is the description of some *maṇḍalas* (magic circle) in which Prajñāpāramitā, represented as a Bodhisattva, occupies the central position, encircled by the ten *pāramitās*.¹⁰⁷ But this textual evidence also does not help us much. Because, even if we take the central figure in the panel as an illustration of Prajñāpāramitā as a Bodhisattva, then we will have to take the ten other figures as the representations of the ten *pāramitās* (including Prajñāpāramitā). But we find that these ten figures do not have the same iconography, which should have been the case if all these ten figures were intended to be of one group or series.

The panel illustrated on the cover of the manuscript cannot also be interpreted as a representation of the *Tārā-Maṇḍala*, because in the *Tārā Maṇḍala* the total number of figures to be represented is also ten.¹⁰⁸ Usually, however, in her *maṇḍala* Tārā is accompanied by eight other accessory Tārās,¹⁰⁹ and the group is known as *Navatārā* (group of nine Tārās), as referred to in the manuscript of the *Dharmakośa-Saṃgraha*.¹¹⁰ In the manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*, there is an illustration (Plate 24) of one Tārā accompanied by eight other Tārās.

This seems to be an illustration of the nine Tārās to be represented in a *Tārā-Manḍala*. Similar representation of a *Tārā-Manḍala*, but in a serried linear composition, is also known from manuscript illuminations (Plate 25).

It appears that the Bodleian manuscript only elaborates the above motif of the *Tārā-Manḍala*. The concept of the latter consisting of ten forms is already known. The *Sādhana-mālā* interprets them as the ten syllables of the *Tārā-mantra* (*om tāre ture tuttāre svāhā*),¹¹¹ and says that these ten syllables represent the ten *pāramitās*.¹¹² These ten syllable-deities, known as the *pāramitās*, are referred to as the deified forms of the ten *bhūmis*.¹¹³ The Bodleian manuscript cover most probably depicts these ten *pāramitā* goddesses (representing the ten *bhūmis* on the one hand and the ten syllables of *Tārā-mantra* on the other) together with Prajñāpāramitā as the quintessence of them all, at the centre.¹¹⁴ Thus it is the representation of the deified form of *Tārā-mantra* with Prajñāpāramitā form of Tārā in the centre.

NOTES

1. 'On the Iconography of Prajñāpāramitā,' *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2; Vol. III, No. 3.
2. It is very difficult to find out the exact meaning of 'candrāsana'. Sometimes we find expressions like 'candrāsane arddhaparyāṅkam', 'candrāsanaśthā', 'padmacandrāsana-prabhām' etc. It appears that the word 'candra' occurs in these cases sometimes to mean the seat of the goddess, and sometimes to denote the sitting attitude of the goddess. *Candra*, we know, is a synonym for *padma*. It is hence not unlikely that the word *candrāsana* has been used here to mean the so-called *padmāsana*.
3. See for the text and translation, *TBIS*, p. 33.
4. The six auspicious ornaments (*ṣaṣṭmudrā*) as enumerated in folio 85a of the *Dharmakośa-Saṅgraha* are: wheel (*cakra*), earring (*Kuṇḍala*), torque (*kaṇṭhī*), bracelet (*rucaka*), girdle (*mekhalā*), and anklet (*nūpura*). See also *Sādhana-mālā* Nos. 250 and 251, where instead of *mekhalā* and *nūpura*, mention is made of *ratna*, and *bhasmasūtraka*.
5. Ms. No. G. 9089, fol. 23a.
6. *Ibid.*, fol. 16b.
7. Saraswati, S.K., *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, Calcutta, 1958, pp. 129ff.
8. *IBI*, p. 49.
9. *SM*, p. 589-90; *ADV*, p. 40-1.
10. *IBI*, p. 10.
11. She is described here as *dvibhujāmekamukhī*, i.e., possessing two hands and one face.
12. She is described as *candrāsanaśīnā*, probably meaning that she is seated in the so-called *padmāsana* (see Note 2 above).
13. *IBI*, pp. 102ff.
14. *SM*, p. 140.
15. *ADV*, Introduction, p. XXX.
16. *SM*, Vol. II, Introduction, p. 81.
17. *JASB*, Vol. II, 1833, pp. 57ff; *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol. IX, pp. 144ff.
18. *IBI*, pp. 42ff.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 387.
20. Sastri, Hiranand., *The Origin and Cult of Tārā*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 20, p. 13.

21. Ibid.
22. Ms. B. 65, fol. 8b.
23. The *Svatantra-Tantra* passage :
Meroh paścimakule tu locanākhyo hrado mahān/Tatra jajñe svayam tārā devī nilasarasvatī ||.
24. The earliest manuscript of the *SM*, known so far, bears the date Newari Samvat 285 (A.D. 1165). Thus it is sure that the *SM* was composed not later than A.D. 1165.
25. *IBI*, p. 35.
26. See Note 24.
27. The *NSP*, was written by Abhayākara Gupta whose date is coeval with that of Pāla king Rāmapāla (circa A.D. 1084-1130). Thus the date of the *NSP*, may roughly be taken as circa A.D. 1100.
28. Sastri, H.P., *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government collection, under the care of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1917, Vol. I, p. 192.
29. *Oriental Art*, Vol. I, p. 6. This date is from the calculation of the date of Rāmapāla suggested by C.F. Duff. Calculated from the dates suggested by R.D. Banerji and H.C. Ray, the date of the present manuscript will be A.D. 1072 and A.D. 1099 respectively.
30. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 47.
31. Lohuizen-De Leeuw, J.E. Van, 'The Paṭṭikera Chundā and variations of her image', *Nalinika ta Bhattasali Commemoration Volume*, Dacca, 1966.
32. Catalogue No. SIA. 94/00142.
33. Banerji, R.D., *Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 47, plate XLI. e; Indian Museum, No. of the image is 3878.
34. *Oriental Art*, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 105.
35. The inscription in the Cambridge Ms. is: *Gridhrakūṭaparvate prajñāpāramitā*: in the Asiatic Society Ms. the inscription is: *Gridhrakūṭe Prajñāpāramitā*. See Foucher, A., *Etude sur l'Iconographie Bouddhique de l'Inde*, Appendix I & II.
36. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 48.
37. *TBIS*, p. 32.
38. The accompanying identificatory inscription in this case is : *Gridhrakūṭe prajñāpāramitā*.
39. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 49.
40. *DHI*, plate III, Fig. 4.
41. *GNB*, p. 131; plate XXV, Fig. b.
42. Coedes, G., *Bronzes Khmers, Ars Asiatica*, Vol. V, Paris, 1923, plate XXXIV, Fig. 1.
43. *TLP*, No. 287, 251. 23.
44. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 50.
45. *GNB*, p. 131.
46. *TLP*, p. 287; No. 252/154.
47. Same as Note 44.
48. Tsuibikow, *Buddhist Palomnik, U Soyatnin, Tibeta*, 1919, p. 15.
49. This Ms. is dated in the Newari Samvat 148 (A.D. 1028). See Mukherjee, B.N., Vasudhārā, *Vasudhārā*, Vol. I, 4th. year, No. 1, p. 24.
50. See Note 29 above.
51. Foucher, op. cit., pp. 152-3; Kramrisch, S., *The Art of Nepal*, New York, 1964, p. 69, figure 21.
52. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 50; *GNB*, p. 131.
53. The only exception, so far noticed, is there with regard to the illustration in the Asutosh Museum Ms., which has wrongly been referred to as Mahāmāyūrī in the picture post-cards published from that Museum.
54. *ADV*, Introduction, p. XVII, note 1.
55. Ibid.
56. *Oriental Art*, Vol. III, No. 3, illustration No. 6.
57. *IBI*, p. 40; Bhattacharyya wrongly labels the female figure as Saṅgha, which should have been labelled as Dharma.

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58. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 49.
59. Ibid.
60. *TLP*, p. 140; No. 4B. 34.
61. Same as Note 58.
62. *SM*, p. 121; *IBI*, figs. 91 & 92.
63. *SM*, p. 111; *IBI*, fig. 86.
64. Visser. H.F.E., *Asiatic Art*, Amsterdam, 1948, plate 144, No. 263; description in p. 66.
65. *Oriental Art*, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 104, note 4.
66. Same as Note 58.
67. *IBI*, pp. 197 ff. and pp. 120 ff; Lohuizen-De Leeuw, op. cit., p. 126.
68. Conze in *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 50, ignores the rosary in the hand of the goddess, and says that the hand is in the *abhaya-mudrā*; in fact, the hand is shown engaged in counting the beads of a rosary; the palm of the hand being turned towards the devotee it gives the impression of the *abhaya-mudrā*. The artist has here very intelligently interpreted the rosary-holding hand in terms of the *abhaya-mudrā*.
69. Conze was wrong (*Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 50) to say that the hand 'seems to bear no attribute'. If examined carefully, it will appear that the hand actually holds a *vajra*.
70. *TLP*, p. 206.
71. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 50.
72. E.g., images Nos. S.I. 974.00124, and S.I.A, 378.10764, both preserved in the Nālandā Museum, images Nos. 8356, 8355, 8442, etc., preserved in the Patna Museum.
73. Mukherjee, op. cit; Pal, P., *Two Buddhist Paintings From Nepal*, Amsterdam, 1967, pp. 10ff. Lohuizen, op. cit., pp. 119 ff.
74. *IBI*, p. 305; also see Chapter VI of the present book.
75. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 50, plate 3.
76. Mukherjee, op. cit. Pal, op. cit.
77. Pal, op. cit., Appendix III.
78. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 50.
79. *Oriental Art*, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 104.
80. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, plate 5 facing p. 51.
81. See Note 78.
82. Ibid.
83. Lohuizen, op. cit., pp. 119 ff.
84. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 51.
85. Coedes, op. cit., Figs. 1-4.
86. See Note 84.
87. *GNB*, plate XXIII, fig. a.
88. *IBI*, p. 231, fig. 172.
89. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 3, p. 105.
90. See Note 83.
91. *NSP*, p. 42; *IBI*, p. 198.
92. Lohuizen, op. cit., pp. 119 ff.
93. Stooke, H.J., 'An XI Century Illuminated Palm-leaf Manuscript', *Oriental Art*, Vol. I, No. I, 1948, pp. 5 ff.
94. *Oriental Art*, Vol. III, No. 3, pp. 104 ff; Deneck, M.M., *Indian Art*, London, 1967, p. 36, plate 30.
95. Stooke, op. cit., p. 7.
96. Deneck, op. cit., p. 36.
97. *NSP*, p. 56.
98. *IBI*, p. 323.
99. Dutt, N., 'Popular Buddhism', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, p. 263.
100. Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1941, Ch. IV, p. 275.

101. Counting from the right side of the central figure of Prajñāpāramitā, the position of Prajñāpāramitā is sixth in the cover illustration.
102. In the *NSP*, p. 56, the list of the *pāramitās* is as follows; *Ratna, Dāna, Śīla, Kṣānti, Vīrya, Dhyanā, Prajñā, Upāya, Prañidhāna, Bala, Jñāna, Vajrakarma*.
103. *Ibid*.
104. Stooke, op. cit., p. 6.
105. See Note 96.
106. *IBI*, pp. 226 ff.
107. *Oriental Art*, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 108.
108. *Vajratārā-Manḍala* description in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, pp. 38-9.
109. Vajratārā is accompanied by Puṣpatārā, Dīpatārā, Gandhatārā, Dhūpatārā, Vajrāṅkuśī, Vajrapāśī, Vajrasphoṭā, Vajraghaṇṭā.
110. Ms. No. G. 8055, folio 10a-10b.
111. *SM*, p. 197: *nirgatodaśadevīnām vibhakto bijatām gataḥ ||*
Om tāre tuttāre ture svāhā.
112. *SM*, p. 185 : *Akṣarairdaśabhiḥcaitā devatyō daśa nirmītāḥ |*
Daśapāramitāḥ śuddhāḥ sarvakarma prāsiddhaye ||
113. *SM*, p. 197 : *Vijñeyā daśa devatyō daśabhūmisvarūpataḥ |*
114. *SM*, p. 195 : refers to the concept of Tārā as “*daśadevatī parivṛitā*”, i.e., surrounded by ten deities—a concept which seems to be the inspiration of Prajñāpāramitā as a manifestation of Tārā was already known to everybody.

FIVE

Five Protective Goddesses

I

In the Vajrayāna-Tantrayāna Buddhist worship, the Pañcarakṣā Goddesses, i.e., the Five Protective Goddesses, held a position of importance and wide popularity.¹ Every Buddhist householder possessed a copy of *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript containing the glorification (*māhātmya*) and painted representation (*citrarūpa*) of the five goddesses, and preserved it in the same spirit of veneration as a Brahmanist householder preserves his copy of the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* or the *Devīmāhātmya-Caṇḍī*. Some recited from the manuscripts on special festive occasions, while others read them regularly. These manuscripts of the *Pañcarakṣā* were considered to be so sacred that they were used in courts of justice for swearing in Buddhist witnesses.

The five protective goddesses are: Mahāpratisarā, Mahāmāyūrī, Mahāsāhasrapramarddinī, Mahāsītavatī and Mahāmantrānusāriṇī.² They are, infact, the five deified mystic spells or charms (*vidyā*): one or the other of the above-mentioned five goddesses is the mistress (*vidyārājñī*) of the collective charms or spells. These spells, collectively known as *Pañcarakṣā*, were considered by the Buddhists to be very efficacious and sacred, since they were regarded as the words of the Lord (*Buddhavaṇa*)³ and, therefore, endowed with potential divinity. Consequently, the divine forms (*devarūpa*) of these charms were conceived of gradually.

The iconography of these five goddesses has been studied by a number of competent scholars.⁴ But their studies have been primarily concerned with showing the nature of the relationship that exists between the icons and their canonical prescriptions found either in the *Sādhana-mālā* or in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, the two celebrated texts on Buddhist iconographical prescriptions. However, these two texts by themselves fail to explain many iconic types found in artistic representations. Significantly enough, a study of several other Buddhist ritualistic texts, lying in unpublished

manuscript forms, has enabled us to explain many such unexplained icons, and to make a few corrections in the previously suggested identifications. For a comprehensive study of any Buddhist iconic type, a thorough exploration of these Buddhist ritualistic texts is as essential as a minute study of all the divinities. These texts also throw a flood of light on the nature and antiquity of the iconic concepts, as well as their relationships with parallel concepts in other faiths.

II

The five goddesses are known as the Pañcarakṣā goddesses or the five protectresses because they are supposed to protect the votaries from all sorts of earthly trouble and misery.⁵ To protect himself from all possible evils, and to ensure the fulfilment of all his desires, the votary was supposed to write the charms or spells of these five protectresses on sheets of paper, horns of animals, or any other suitable object,⁶ and hold them as amulets on his person. Sometimes, five coloured threads (*pañca-rañjikasūtrāṇi*) represented the five protectresses. It is stated that those who hold these spells or charms on the neck or arm as amulets are always protected by the gods and demi-gods.⁷ It has also been pointed out that by doing so one can live in happiness as long as one desires.⁸

Furthermore, to the worship of the five protectresses was attached a series of interesting and attractive prospects, perhaps with a view to making their worship acceptable to a maximum number of people. It was believed that their worship could usher in timely rain and save people from draughts, the ultimate gain for the worshipper being a good harvest.⁹ It was also believed that the worship of the goddess Mahāpratisarā could ensure the pregnant women safety both during delivery and the period of gestation.¹⁰ It was also a strong belief with the Buddhists that the worship of the goddess Mahāmāyūrī could protect people from any kind of poison, especially from snake-bite.¹¹ The worshippers of Mahāsāhasrapramarddinī never fall into the trap of evil spirits like the *bhūtas*, *yakṣas*, and the *rākṣasas*.¹² Mahāsītavatī is worshipped usually for the general welfare (*sarvaśānti*), and sometimes even for protection from small-pox (*māraguṭikā*).¹³ Finally, one did not have to worship the goddess at all. The devotee could get the desired result if he cared simply to hear, write, read, speak, or hold the charms or spells of the respective goddesses.¹⁴

III

It is to be noted that the supreme Buddhist goddess Tārā is also essentially concerned with the protection of the devotees. It is stated both in the *Āryatārāṣṭottara-śatanāma* and the *Tārābhaṭṭārikānāma-stotraśata* section of the *Dhāraṇi-Saṃgraha* that the goddess Tārā appears as the protectress of the world whenever the people are in any distress.¹⁵ In the *Tārābodha-utpātakathā* also, the goddess Tārā figures as the protectress from perils (*utpātarakṣaṇa*) and the mistress of the welfare of the

people.¹⁶ In her *Aṣṭamahābhaya* aspect, the goddess Tārā is invoked specially for the deliverance from the eight great perils (*aṣṭamahābhaya*) such as shipwreck, conflagration, enraged elephant, brigand, pouncing lion, serpent, prison, and demon, as enumerated in the *Śragdharā-Stotra* composed by Sarvajñamitra (circa A.D. 800) in praise of the goddess Tārā.¹⁷ It is significant that the Pañcarakṣā goddesses are also stated to have been invoked for deliverance from the eight great perils (*aṣṭamahādārunābhayebhyaḥ*), which are almost the same as those of the list of Sarvajñamitra.¹⁸

The Pañcarakṣā goddesses are often regarded as venerable even to Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara, Indra, the Tathāgatas, gods and goddesses, and generally to learned men and women.¹⁹ Moreover, each of them is considered as the one who not only is the mother of the three worlds, but also as the one who keeps a constant watch on the three worlds, enlightens them, and thereby helps them flourish.²⁰ All these supreme epithets are usually assigned to the supreme goddess Tārā. And it is no doubt quite significant that the Pañcarakṣā goddesses are often referred to as Tāraṇī Taraṇī, which means the saviour-boat.²¹ It is stated in the *Tārābhaṭṭārikānāma-stotraśata* section of the *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha* that the utterance of the very name Tārā ensures the fulfilment of all aspirations.²² Similarly, it is claimed that one can get rid of all misdeeds if one merely hears the name of any one of the five *rakṣā goddesses*.²³ Thus it appears that the Pañcarakṣā goddesses are conceptually no different than the supreme Buddhist goddess Tārā herself, manifested in five forms (*pañcarūpeṇa saṁsthitā*) for the benefit of the worshippers (*sādhakānām hitārthāya*).²⁴

IV

It is of interest that the goddess Tārā is often referred to as Skandamātā; i.e., mother of Skanda-Kārttikeya.²⁵ We know that six mothers (*ṣaṣṭmātrikā*) were in charge of the protection of Skanda-Kārttikeya.²⁶ Thus, it is found that in the epithet “Skandamātā”, the mother aspect of Tārā as well as her protective power is implied. Like Tārā, the Pañcarakṣā goddesses are also referred to as Skandamātā,²⁷ evidently implying that they are the protective mothers (*mātrikā*) of the votaries.

The *mātrikās* (divine mothers) are, in fact, the *śaktis* (female energies) of the respective gods. As *mātrikās*, the Pañcarakṣā goddesses are also probably the *śaktis* or female energies of five Buddhist gods. The number of the *rakṣā* goddesses being five, one is tempted to relate them with the five Tathāgatas. Each of the five *rakṣā* goddesses, it is to be noted, is not only associated with one or the other of the five Tathāgatas but they also follow them in respect of their body-colour and animal-associates.²⁸ Moreover, since in many manuscripts of the *Pañcarakṣā*, the five Tathāgatas are also found to be illustrated along with illustrations of *rakṣā* goddesses, a possible relationship between the two can easily be presumed. However, it is not possible to say categorically that the *rakṣā* goddesses are the *śaktis* of the Tathāgatas. In the *Sādhana-mālā*, the five *rakṣā* goddesses—Mahāpratisarā, Mahāsāhasrapramarddinī, Mahāmāyūrī, Mahāmantrānūsārīṇī, and Mahāsivatatī—are described as possessing on their respective crowns the figures of the five Tathāgatas—

Ratnasambhava, Vairocana, Amoghasiddhi, Akṣobhya, and Amitābha—as their respective sires, or *Kuleśa*.²⁹ In the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscripts also, the five *rakṣā* goddesses are described as having the Tathāgatas on their crowns or as being surrounded by the Jinās or Buddhas.³¹ But nowhere have they been characterized as the *śaktis* of the Tathāgatas.

The Śaktis of the Tathāgatas, we know, are Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍarā, Tārā, and Vajradhātviśvarī. The Pañcarakṣā goddesses differ from them both in name and iconography. Even then, there is of course the scope for postulating that the Pañcarakṣā goddesses developed out of the five *śaktis* (*pañcaśakti*) of the Tathāgatas. To start with, the Tathāgatas were conceived as having two hands and one face. But later on, their multi-handed and multi-headed forms were evolved.³² With the elaboration of the iconography of the Tathāgatas, there was possibly a consequent need for the elaboration of the iconography of their *śaktis* in order to rationalise the relationship between the two. The Pañcarakṣā goddesses may be the result of such an elaboration.

V

There exist some interesting similarities between the Pañcarakṣā goddesses and some goddesses of Brahmanical pantheon, at least in respect of the name and concept, if not in respect of iconography. The Pañcarakṣā goddesses are often referred to, we have noted above, as Skandamātā, an epithet of the supreme Brahmanical goddess Caṇḍī or Durgā, and also of her important manifestations known as the *Mātṛikās* or Divine Mothers.³³ Like the Pañcarakṣā goddesses, Durgā or Caṇḍī in all her manifestations is essentially concerned with the protection (*rakṣā*) of the devotees from all obstacles and perils, as is evident from the celebrated *Devīmāhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa*. The concept of the Pañcarakṣā goddesses as the rain-givers in the times of need and in the required extent for the proper nourishment of the crops, and thus saving the people from draught and famine, reminds us of almost a similar concept of the goddess Caṇḍī who, in her Śākambharī aspect, is stated to have saved people not only from draughts by bringing in a good shower of rains, but also by sustaining the people with the few plants (*śāka*) which she willfully created from her divine body itself.³⁴

These and many other striking similarities do exist probably because of the fact that the Pañcarakṣā goddesses are the manifestations of the supreme Buddhist goddess Tārā, who is almost exactly similar to the supreme Brahmanical goddess Caṇḍī or Durgā, both in respect of concept and iconography.³⁵ It is not without any reason that even today Buddhist householders in Nepal preserve copies of the Pañcarakṣā with the same spirit of veneration with which their Brahmanist counterparts preserve copies of the *Devīmāhātmya-Caṇḍī*.

Significantly, the concepts of all the five *rakṣā* goddesses are to be found in the Purāṇas in some form or the other. The Pañcarakṣā goddesses have been invoked for the safety of the pregnant women during the period of gestation, safe delivery of the child, and even for the overall care and protection of the child after the delivery.³⁶

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For a similar purpose, the Brahmanists worship the goddess Śaṣṭhīmātā,³⁷ popularly known as Ṣeṭherā, who, of course, unlike her Buddhist counterpart, has six forms (*ṣaṣṭmātrikā*).

Pratisarā is the name of the Earth Goddess (*Vasumatī*) who according to the *Purāṇas*, was brought out of the ocean by Viṣṇu in his Boar-Incarnation (*Varāha-Avatāra*).³⁸ The goddess *Mahāmāyūrī* seems to be conceptually akin to the Brahmanical goddess *Manasā*, both of them being worshipped for safety from snake-bites. The *Mahāmāyūrī*-mantra of the Buddhists reminds us of the *Mahāgāruḍī*-mantra of the *Purāṇas*, both of which had to be uttered for gaining immunity from snake-bites.³⁹ The goddess *Mahāsītavati* can be equated with the Brahmanical goddess *Śītalā*, because, (a) the phonetic similarity in their names and (b) they are both worshipped for relief from small-pox.⁴⁰ In the *Skanda-Purāṇa*, a mystic form of *Durgā* is referred to as the *Devī-Harasiddhā*. This form of the *Devī* has been referred to there as *Mahāmantraviśārādā* (well-versed in great spells).⁴¹ This appellation of the *Devī* cannot but remind us of the goddess *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* (follower of great spells) of the *Pañcarakṣā* group. The name of the goddess *Mahāsāhasrapramarddinī* brings to our mind the *Mahiṣāsūramarddinī* form of the goddess *Durgā*. The former tramples under her feet the *bhūtas*, *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas*,⁴² whereas the latter tramples under her feet the buffalo-demon (*mahiṣāsura*).

Moreover, we have also to note that the Buddhists claim that one can get rid of all sins even if one merely hears the name of any of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses (*tasyā nāmadheya śravaṇamapi paramadurlabham sarvapāpakṣayaṃkarī*).⁴³ This reminds us of the traditional Brahmanical concept of the *Pañcakanyā* (five mythico-historical ladies), namely, *Ahalyā*, *Draupadī*, *Kuntī*, *Tārā* and *Mandodarī*, the very mention of whose names, it is believed by the Brahmanists, destroys all sins (*Pañcakanyā smareṇṇītyaṃ mahāpātakanāśanam*).⁴⁴

From these similarities in concepts, we can possibly say that the basic ideas and ideologies were already floating about in other forms, and were crystallised by the *Vajrayāna*-*Tantrayāna* Buddhists into the composite concept of the *Pañcarakṣā*. In this process of crystallisation, the imaginative mind of the Buddhist priests did play a significant role. But a deep probe into the question of their originality and individuality will possibly show that in many instances they did not invent anything new, but gave a new interpretation to the concepts and forms already prevalent in other faiths.

VI

It is very difficult to say anything precisely about the antiquity of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses. We know that the five goddesses are the five deified spells. These five spells, it is stated in the *Pañcarakṣā*, were first disclosed by Gautama the Buddha himself.⁴⁵ But we do not have any other evidence to prove that the five goddesses are really that ancient. We are not even sure whether all the five spells were simultaneously deified. It, however, appears that the more popular spells were deified first.

The immense popularity of the Mahāmāyūrī-spell during the period between the fourth and eighth centuries A.D. is attested not only by the mention of the spell in the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and the *Harṣacarita* of *Bāṇabhaṭṭa*, but also by the fact that the spell in question is known to have been translated into Chinese four times between the periods mentioned above.⁴⁶ This popularity of the Mahāmāyūrī-spell probably led to its personification into the goddess Mahāmāyūrī by the eighth century A.D., if not earlier. Because images of the goddess datable to this period have been found both at Nālandā and at Ellora.⁴⁷ These are the earliest known representations of any goddess of the Pañcarakṣā group.

The deification of the other four spells into the respective goddesses and the consequent formation of the group of five might have been completed by the eleventh century A.D. The earliest manuscript known so far, illustrating the Pañcarakṣā goddesses, is the Cambridge University Library manuscript (No. Add. 1688), copied in the fourteenth year of Nayapāladeva of the Pāla dynasty, who is placed in the latter half of the eleventh century A.D.⁴⁸ Another early manuscript illustrating the Pañcarakṣā goddesses is the Calcutta Asutosh Museum manuscript (No. T. 1055) copied in the Newari Saṃvat 225 (A.D. 1105) during the reign of Sihadeva, King of Nepal.⁴⁹ The iconography of the five goddesses in the Cambridge manuscript seems to be relatively more simple than the types represented in the Asutosh Museum manuscript. It is interesting to note that the types represented in the illustrations of the last-mentioned manuscript have striking textual corroboration in the *Sādhanamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, which were compiled definitely by the twelfth century A.D.⁵⁰

VII

The study of the nature of relationship between the representations of the Pañcarakṣā goddesses in art and their textual prescriptions is difficult. Often we do come across representations for which we have still to find textual corroboration and *vice versa*. Moreover, sometimes it is found that the iconographic features ascribed to a particular goddess in the texts have been given to another goddess in actual representation,⁵¹ perhaps because such illustrations did follow some other textual traditions, not yet known to us, or because of gross mistake on the part of the artist or in his source of information.

So far as the canonical prescriptions for the iconography of the five *rakṣā* goddesses are concerned, apart from the published texts of the *Sādhanamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, a few ritualistic texts lying unpublished in manuscript form have been carefully studied by the author. The names of these unpublished texts are: (a) *Pañcarakṣā*, (b) *Vajrāvalīnāmamaṇḍalopāyikā*, (c) *Abhidhānottara*, (d) *Ekallavīra-Canḍa-Mahāroṣaṇā-Tantra*, (e) *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha*, (f) *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha*, (g) *Tārāṣṭottaraśatanāma*, (h) *Pūjāvidhi*, and (i) *Pūjāpaddati*. The manuscripts of these important texts are preserved in the Library of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta.⁵² From a study of these texts and also of the representations of the *rakṣā* goddesses

in art, we know that the Pañcarakṣā goddesses were worshipped either in a *maṇḍala* or a group of five, or independently. Moreover, the iconography of the goddesses worshipped in a *maṇḍala* differs from that when they are worshipped individually.

In the *maṇḍala*, the central position is occupied by the queen of the spells (*vidyā-rājīnī*), and the four other positions surrounding her are occupied by the remaining four goddesses. These five goddesses are thus arranged within the circle of the *maṇḍala*, (*antarpuṭa*) which is situated within a bigger square enclosure (*maṇḍala-kṣetra*) having on each of its sides a gateway (*torāṇa*). At the four cardinal sides within this square there are the *śaṅkha* (conch), *vajra* (thunderbolt), *triśūla* (trident), and the *paraśu* (axe), indicating the symbolic presence of the four accessory deities: Kālī, Kālārātri, Mahāyaśā and Kālakaṇṭhī respectively. The four gateways or *torāṇas* are guarded by the four guardian-goddesses: Vajrāṅkuṣī, Vajrapāśī, vajrasphoṭā, and Vajraveśyā, who of course, are not always represented anthropomorphically in the *maṇḍala*⁵³ (Plate 26):

Usually, Mahāpratisarā, Mahāmāyūrī, Mahāsāhasrapramarddinī, Mahāsītavatī, and Mahāmantrānusārīnī have white, yellow, blue, green and red colours respectively. Whenever the goddesses are represented with more than one face, the colour of the principal face invariably follows that of the body. The goddesses are represented both as standing and as seated, but the latter seems to be the usual type. Only a few standing types are known, the earliest of which seems to be the representations of Mahāmāyūrī in cave Nos. 6 and 8 at Ellora.

Of the five goddesses, Mahāsāhasrapramarddinī is the most conspicuous not only by her dark (blue) colour, but also by her fearful mien resulting from contorted eye-brows, exposed fangs, and sometimes by her obesity and other grotesque features of the body. The remaining four goddesses are usually found to be represented with a very serene and peaceful expression. Of the various attributes in the hands of these goddesses, the most interesting is the peacock-feather (*mayūrapiccha*) held by Mahāmāyūrī. As she is the protectress from snake-poison (*sarpa-viṣa*), her association with the peacock, the relentless enemy of the serpents, is very interesting and significant. Often Mahāmāyūrī is seen to have the peacock as her associate in the representations, for which there is textual support.⁵⁴ The multi-handed (twelve-handed) forms of the goddess Mahāmantrānusārīnī can easily be identified by the presence of two *mudrās* in her hands, namely, the *dharmacakrapravartana-mudrā* and the *dhyāna-mudrā*. The goddess Mahāsītavatī is almost invariably represented with her principal right hand disposed in the *abhaya-mudrā*.

The goddesses are assigned three principal modes of sitting : *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, *lalitāśana*, and *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*. Mahāsāhasrapramarddinī, of course, is often represented as trampling on the demons or *yakṣas*, and sometimes even in the attitude of kneeling down on the seat. This attitude is known as *jānuparyāṅkāśana*, and is usually assigned to the destructive forms (*ugra-mūrti*) of divinities in Buddhist iconography.

From a study of the concept behind the Pañcarakṣā goddesses as well as their actual delineation in art, it appears that the worship of the Pañcarakṣā meant to the Buddhists a sort of combined worship of both the fearful (*ugra*) and serene

(*saumya*) aspects of the supreme goddess. The Buddhists worshipped the five goddesses, on the one hand to pacify their wrath and anger, and on the other to obtain their favour and grace.

NOTES

1. *IBI*, p. 302; *NSP*, Introduction, p. 53; *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 114.
2. The name of the third is also spelt as -mardini, and -mardani; that of the fourth as -sītavati/ -sītavati; and that of the fifth as -mantrānūdhārini.
3. Ms No. B. 35, fol. 638: *kṣuradhārāsamā vidyā gotamena prakāṣitā*; fol. 68: *karuṇāt sarvasattānāṃ lokanāthena bhāṣitā*.
4. Bhattacharyya, *IBI*; N K. Bhattasali, *Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, Dacca, 1929; Conze, E., 'Remarks on a Pāla Ms. in the Bodleian Library,' *Oriental Art*, Vol. I, No. 1: Foucher, A., *Etude sur l'Iconographie Bouddhique de l'Inde*, Paris, 1900-1905; Getty, A., *GNB*; Gordon, A.K., *The Iconography of Tibetan Lamalism*, New York, 1939; H.J. Stooke, "An XI century Palm-leaf Ms." *Oriental Art*, Vol. I, No. I, 1948; M. Mukherjee, "Illuminations of a Ms. in the Asutosh Museum," *JISOA*, Vol. XV (1947).
5. Ms. B. 35, fol. 13a: *sarvatra sarvadā sarvabhayebhyaḥ sarvopadravebhyaḥ sarvabyādhibhyaḥ sarvaduṣṭabhayātitebhyaḥ sarvakalikalahavigrahavivādebhyaḥ*. . .
6. Ibid., fol 40a: *paṭe vā paśuśṛṅge vānyatra vā yatra kutracit*.
7. Ibid., fol. 8a: *yaḥ kaściddhārayedvidyāṃ kaṇṭhe bāhai ca nityaśaḥ*, . . . *nityaṃ rakṣyanti devendra nāgarāja tathaivaca*.
8. Ibid., fol. 40b: *evam likhet prayatnena yadicchejjīvitam sukham*, . . . *tasyepsitāni kāryāni sidhyate nātra saṃśayaḥ*.
9. Ibid., fol. 27a: *sarvāṇi ca puṣpaphalapatravānyasya o śadhiśasyādīnyativardhante, surasāni, svādūni mṛdūni bhaviṣyanti, samyagena paripācitāṃ bhaviṣyanti atirīṣṭi, nāvṛṣṭi ye ca tasminviśaye mabandamaste ca samyageva kālavarṣadhārā utsrjanti* . . . ; fol. 183a *ativarsannigabanti anavṛtau dharapata karisyanti*.
10. Ibid., fol. 28a : *sukhena varddhate garbha sukhena prasūyati*.
11. Ibid., fol. 102b : *ahidaṣṭe viśapīte pītvā kṣipraṃ vimucyati*.
12. Ibid., fols. 69a-70b : *dhāvanti puratasteṣāṃ bhūtayakṣamahābhayāḥ* . . . *teṣāṃ daṇḍa praṇeṣyām lokanāthasya sammukham*.
13. Ibid., fol. 199 : *māraguṭikā tāriṇī devī sarvarogavināśinī*.
14. Ibid., fol. 33b : *atidurlabham asyeva śravaṇaṃ kiṃpuna likhana pāṭhana vācana dhāraṇa sādhyāyana*. . .
15. Ms. No. B. 33, fols. 2a-2b; Ms. No. B. 65, fols. 7a-7b.
16. Ms. No. G. 4756 A, fol 1a : *mānavānāṃ hitarthāya tārādevī mahākṛpā | utpātarakṣaṇasyāpi śubhāśubha balikṣaṇā ||*
17. Mitra, D., "Aṣṭamahābhaya Tārā", *JAS*, Vol. XXIII, No. I (1957), pp. 19-22.
18. Ms. B. 35, fol. 13b : *sarvasattānāṃ trāyasva māmaṣṭamahādāruṇabhayebhyaḥ* ; fols. 143a-143b: *rakṣa kuryantu rājabhayāt corabhayāt agnibhayāt udakabhayāt paracakrabhayāt durbhikṣabhayāt aśanibhayāt akālamṛtyubhayāt dharāṇikampabhayāt dhanikabhayāt caṇḍamṛgabhayāt amitrabhayāt badhakabhayāt*. . .
19. Ms. B. 35, fol. 87b: *indrena saṃpūjitā lokapālā namaskṛtā īśvareṇa saṃpūjitā sarvadevairvan-ditā yogācāraitrabhinanditā paṇḍitair praśaṃsitā*. . . ; fol. 14a: *sarvatathāgatamūr ddhābhiṣikte svāhā* . . . *sarvabuddha bodhisattvābhiṣikte svāhā*. . . *brahmeṇopāsīte svāhā* . . . *viṣṇunamaskṛte svāhā māheśvara vandite pūjite svāhā*.
20. Ibid., fol. 48a : *trilokavarddhanī trilokajanānī trilokālokarī traidhātukamavalokinī*.

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21. Ibid., fol. 197a.
22. Ms. B. 65, fol. 9a : *tārānāmaguṇānantā sarvāśāparipūranti.*
23. Ms. B. 35, fol. 33b : *tasyā nāmadheya śravaṇamapi paramadurlabham sarvapāpakṣayainkarī.*
24. Ms. G. 9089, fol. 2a.
25. Ms. B. 65, fol. 9b.
26. *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, 225, 16-17.
27. Ms. B. 35, fol. 7a.
28. NSP., pp. 42,44,45,48,54; GNB., p. 28; IBI., pp. 49 ff.; Ms. G. 8055, fol. 30a: *sarvā api vajrāsanā kutracit sīmādyāsana.*
29. SM., Nos. 197, 198, 199, 200, 201.
30. Ms. B. 35, fol. 14a : *sarvatathāgatamūrdhābhiṣikte svāhā,*
31. Ibid., fol. 200a : *sarvajinagaṇa parivṛtā.*
32. NSP, pp. 42, 44, 45, 48, 54.
33. *Devikavacam of the Varāha-Purāṇa; Devimāhatmya of the Mārkaṇḍeya-Purāṇa.*
34. Majumdar, S., ed., *Śrī Śrī Caṇḍī*, Calcutta, 1362, Bengali Samvat, Uttaracarita, Ch. XI, v. 48 :
Tato 'hamakhilāṃ lokamātmadeha samudbhavaiḥ |
bhāṣyāmi surāḥ, śākairāvṛṣṭeḥ prāṇadhārakaiḥ ||
śākambharīti vikhyātīṃ tadā yāṣyāmyaham bhuvi ||
35. Bhattacharyya, D.C.; "An Unknown Form of Tārā," Sircar, D.C., ed., *The Śakti Cult and Tārā*, Calcutta, 1967, pp. 134-144.
36. Ms. B. 35, fol. 28a : *sukhena varddhate garbha sukhena prasūyati;*
 fol. 99a : *garbhasthā sukhinosyantu mocanasya kujātakāḥ;*
 fol. 157a : *svasti garbhagatasya; pālita putravat nityaṃ sarvasvasti kariṣyati.*
37. DHI, p. 384.
38. *Skanda-Purāṇa*, Vāṅgavāsī edition, Viṣṇu-Khaṇḍam, Venkaṭācala-māhātmyam, Ch. 36, v. 16:
pratisārā vabhūvādho vāridhermaṅgalocitā.
39. Ray, J.C., Vidyanidhi, *Pūjā-Pārvaṇ*, Visvabhāratī, 1358, Bengali Samvat, p. 151. It is interesting to note that both Garuḍa and Mayūra are enemies of the serpents and that the latter is the son of the former. Cf. *Skanda-Purāṇa*, Vāṅgavāsī ed., Māheśvara-Khaṇḍa/Kumārikā-Khaṇḍa, Ch. 30, v. 41 : *garuḍo dayitam putram mayūram citrabarhiṇam.*
40. Ms. B. 35, fol. 199 : *māraguṇitakā tārinī devī sarvarogavināśinī ; Skanda-Purāṇa*, Viṣṇu-Khaṇḍa, Ayodhyā-māhātmyam, Ch. 8, verses 21 ff. :
tatraivottarabhāge tu śitalā varttatenaghā |
viṣphoṭakādikabhaye naraiṣca samupastihite |
kartavyam pūjanam samyagrogādibhayanāśanam ||
41. *Skanda-Purāṇa*, Māheśvara-Khaṇḍa /
 Kumārikā-Khaṇḍa, Ch. 47, verse 63 :
tato rudraśarīrātto viniṣkrāntārttināśinī |
harasiddirmahādurgā mahāmantraviśārādā. ||
42. Ms. B. 35, fol. 66a : *mahāsāhasrakāyena mardditā yakṣarākṣasāḥ.*
43. Ms. B. 35, fol. 33b.
44. The other reading for this is : *pañcakam nā smareṇṇityaṃ mahāpātakanāśanam.* In both the readings, the meaning basically remains the same.
45. See Note 3.
46. Banerjee, J.N., *Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion*, Calcutta, 1966, p. 71; *Harṣacarita* ed. by P.V. Kane, 1966, pañcama uccvāsa, p. 21; *Aryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, ed. by N. Sastri, (Trivandram Sanskrit Series), p. 10.
47. JAS, Vol. I, No. I (1959), pp. 37 ff.
48. JISOA, Vol. XV, p. 94.
49. Saraswati, S.K., "Sihadeva, a forgotten king of Nepal," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Bombay, 1947, p. 252.
50. See Mukherjee, M.'s article in the JISOA, Vol. XV (1947). The earliest manuscript of the

Sādhanaṃālā is dated in the Newari Samvat 285, corresponding to A.D. 1165. The *Niṣpannayogāvalī* was composed by Abhayākara Gupta who flourished during the reign of the Pāla king Rāmapāla (A.D. 1084-1130).

51. In the Ms. B. 4, the goddess Mahāmāyūrī has been illustrated with a horse as her mount (*vāhana*), whereas it is well-known that the goddess actually is assigned a peacock (*mayūra*) as the *vāhana*. See Bhattacharyya, D.C., "The Goddess Mahāmāyūrī and the Peacock", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Allahabad, 1966.
52. Mss. B. 35, B. 4, G. 3853, 4078, 9970; G. 3855, 4835; G. 10759; G. 9089; B. 33, 65; G. 1074 D, G. 8055; G. 4790, A. 12.
53. Description of the Pañcarakṣā *maṇḍala* is to be found in Ms. G. 3855, fol. 61b, Ms. B. 35, fols. 40b-41a, and also in the *NSP*, pp. 42-43.
54. Bhattacharyya, D.C., "The Goddess Mahāmāyūrī and the Peacock", *op. cit.*

SIX

Iconography of the Pañcarakṣā

I

The materials for the study of the iconography of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses are of two types: (a) the textual descriptions, (b) the visual representations of the goddesses. The former type of material is to be found in various published and unpublished tāntric Buddhist works, while the latter type of material consists of numerous representations of the goddesses in sculpture as well as in paintings contained in the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscripts preserved in various public and private collections.

The *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses are worshipped either singly or collectively in a *maṇḍala*. The iconography of these goddesses when worshipped independently differs from that of those worshipped in a *maṇḍala*. This is evident both from the textual description as well as from the visual representations of the goddesses. Three very important descriptions of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses worshipped in a *maṇḍala* are known to us so far: (a) the description in the *Pañcarakṣā-Vidhāna* section of the *Sādhana-mālā* (*sādhana* No. 206), (b) the description in the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala* section of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, and (c) the description in the *Dharmakośa-saṃgraha* of Amṛitānanda.¹ The last mentioned source-material is being used here for the first time.

In the *Vajrāvalīnāma-maṇḍalopāyikā* of Abhayākaragupta² also, there is a description of the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala*, but there the respective iconography of the five goddesses is not described; it gives an account of the respective symbols of the five *rakṣā* goddesses and those of their acolytes. Although in it there is no physical description of the five goddesses, it appears that it had in view the iconography of the goddesses described in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, not only because both the works are by the same author, but also for the striking agreement between these two works on the respective positions occupied by the goddesses in the *maṇḍala*.

For a clear idea about the textual prescription for the iconography of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses worshipped in a *maṇḍala* we have first to take note of all such prescriptions available. For this we begin with Mahāpratisarā and follow the order maintained in the *Pañcarakṣā-Vidhāna* section of the *Sādhnamālā*.

MAHAPRATISARA

In the *Pañcarakṣā-Vidhāna* section of the *Sādhnamālā* the goddess Mahāpratisarā is described thus:

Mahāpratisarā is white in colour, appears to be twice eight (i.e., sixteen) years in age, has the *caitya* on the crown and the moon as her seat. She resides in the orb of the sun and sits in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana* attitude. She has three eyes, eight arms and she is adorned with dangling earrings, necklace, anklets, golden armlets, girdle and all other ornaments. The first face of the goddess is white, right blue, the face at the back yellow, and the left face is red. She holds the discus in the first right hand, the *vajra* in the second, the arrow in the third, and the sword in the fourth. She holds the noose in the first left hand, the trident in the second, the bow in the third, and the axe in the fourth. Over her head is the foliage of the *Bodhi*-tree with various flowers and fruits.

The *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala* section of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* gives the following description of Mahāpratisarā:

Mahāpratisarā has a yellowish red halo and she is four-faced. The main face is yellow, the right white, face at the back is blue and the left is of red colour. Her right hands show the jewel, the discus, the *vajra*, the arrow, the sword and the *varadamudrā*. The left hands show the *vajra*, the noose, the trident, the bow, the axe, and the conch. She is thus twelve-armed. Her head is beautified with a *caitya* and she sits in the *vajraparyāṅka* attitude.

In the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* (Ms. G. 80055, See *TBIS*, p. 40) Mahāpratisarā is described as under:

Pratisarā is four-faced. The principal face is white, right face yellow, the upper face red and the left face green. She has eight hands of which the first, second, third and fourth right hands show the sword, arrow, *vajra*, and the discus near the heart respectively. The first, second, third, and the fourth left hands show respectively the goad, bow, trident, and noose.

MAHASAHSRAPRAMARDINI

In the *Pañcarakṣā-Vidhāna* section of the *Sādhnamālā* the following description of Mahāsāhasrapramardinī occurs:

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Mahāsāhasrapramardinī has blue complexion, brown hair rising upwards and is with garlands of human skulls. Her face looks terrible with contortions of the brow and canine teeth. Her seat is the burning sun on which she sits in the *lalitākṣepa* attitude, and tramples upon the *bhūtas* and the *yakṣas*. She is adorned with golden armlets, necklace and anklets. Her first right hand shows the *varadamudrā*, the second carries the goad, the third an arrow, and the fourth carries a sword. Her first left hand shows the *tarjanīpāśa*, the second carries an axe, the third a bow, and the fourth carries sixteen jewels on a lotus. Her principal face is blue, the right face white, the face at the back yellow, and the left green. All the faces have three eyes each. Her body is adorned with all kinds of ornaments of jewels; she has great strength and power and she wears awe-inspiring dress. Over her head is the Bo-tree.

In the Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala section of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* we have:

Mahāsāhasrapramardinī is seated in the *lalitākṣepa* attitude on the orb of the moon placed on a double lotus. She is white in colour, has a halo of the moon and is four-faced. Her principal face is of white colour, the right face blue, the face behind is yellow and the left is of green colour. In her right hands, she shows the eight-spoked wheel on a lotus, the *varadamudrā*, the goad, the arrow and the sword. In her left hands, she exhibits the *vajra*, the *tarjanīmudrā*, the noose, the bow, and the noose; she is thus ten-handed.

In the *Dharmakośa-Saṃgraha* (TBIS, p. 40) the following description is found:

Mahāsāhasrapramardinī has four faces, of which the principal one is blue, the right white, the upper one red, and the left green. She is blue in colour, and possesses eight hands. Her first, second, third and fourth right hands show the *vajra*, sword, arrow, and axe respectively. The first, second, third, and fourth left hands show respectively the noose, lotus, bow and double *vajra*.

MAHAMAYURI

In the Pañcarakṣā-vidhāna section of the *Sāadhanamālā* we have:

Mahāmāyūrī is yellow in colour, rests on the orb of the sun and is seated in the *sattvaparyāṅka* attitude. She is three-faced, three-eyed, and eight-armed. She has jewels on the crown and wears all sorts of ornaments. The first right hand exhibits the *varadamudrā*, the second, a vessel of gems, the third, a *cakra*, and the fourth, a sword. The first, second, third, and fourth left hands show respectively the mendicant on a bowl, the peacock's feather, the bell surmounted by a double *vajra*, and the bejewelled banner. Her principal face is yellow, the right blue, and the left red. She is adorned with the foliage of *Aśoka*-tree.

In the Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala section of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* we find:

Mahāmāyūrī sits in the *sattvaparyāṅkāśana* on the orb of the moon on a double lotus and possesses the halo of the moon. She is green in colour and her principal, right and left faces are green, white and blue respectively. She has eight arms of which the right ones show the peacock's feather, arrow, *varadamudrā*, and the sword, while her left hands show the mendicant on a bowl, bow, jar on the lap showering jewels, double *vajra*, and the jewel-marked banner.

In the *Dharmakoṣā-Saṃgraha* (TBIS, p. 40) we see:

Mahāmāyūrī has three faces—the principal yellow, the right green, the left red. She is eight-handed. The first right hand shows the sword, the second a *cakra*, the third a lotus and the fourth the *varadamudrā*. The first left hand holds jewel, the second a banner, the third shows the gesture of applying vermilion on the forehead, and the fourth holds a treasure-pot.

MAHAMANTRANUSARINI

In the *Pañcarakṣā-vidhāna* section of the *Sādhanamālā* we have:

Mahāmantrānusārīṇī is to be conceived as having white complexion, twelve arms, three faces each with three eyes. She resides in the orb of the burning sun and wears jewel on the crown; she is adorned with all kinds of ornaments, she is youthful and she wears the ornaments like the bracelet, anklet and earring. She is decked with the *Śrīṣa* tree. Her first pair of hands exhibits the *dharmacakramudrā* and the second pair the *Samādhimudrā*, (the remaining) third, fourth, fifth and sixth (right hands) show respectively the *varada* and the *abhaya* poses, the *vajra* and the arrow. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth (left hands) show the *tarjanīpāśā*, the bow, the jewel and the vessel having a lotus mark respectively. The main face is white, the right blue, the left red. Various flowers are strewn on all sides of the goddess.

In the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala* section of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* we find:

Mahāmantrānusārīṇī sits in the *Vajraparyāṅka* attitude in the orb of the sun over a double lotus, and possesses the halo of the sun. She is blue in colour. Her principal face is blue, the right is white and the left red. She has twelve arms, of which one pair of right and left hands displays the *dharmacakramudrā*. With another pair of hands she exhibits the *samādhimudrā*. In the remaining right hands she shows the *vajra*, the arrow, the *varadamudrā*, and the *abhaya-mudrā*. The remaining left hands exhibit the *tarjanīpāśa*, the bow, the jewel, and the jar marked with a lotus.

In the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* (TBIS, p. 41):

Mantrānusāriṇī is three-faced and green-complexioned. Her principal face is green, right face white, left blue. She has twelve arms, of which the first pair of right and left arms shows the *dharmacakramudrā*, the second pair holds a treasure-pot, the third pair a sword and a lotus, the fourth an arrow and a bow, the fifth a double *vajra* and a bell, and the sixth pair shows the *abhayamudrā* and a noose.

MAHASITAVATĪ

In the *Pañcarakṣā-vidhāna* section of the *Sādhana-mālā*:

Mahāsitaṭatī has green complexion, resides in the orb of the sun, has three faces, three eyes and six arms. She bears the image of the Tathāgata on the crown; she is adorned with all kinds of ornaments and she wears celestial garments. Her first right hand displays the *abhaya* pose, the second has the *vajra* and the third an arrow, while the first left hand shows the *tarjanīpāśa*, the second carries a bow and the third a bejewelled banner. Her principal face is green, the right face white and the left red. Over her head is the foliage of the *Cam-paka* tree.

In the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala* section of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*:

Mahāsitaṭatī sits in the orb of the sun on a double lotus in the *ardhaparyāṅka* attitude and possesses the halo of the sun. She is red in colour, and her principal, right and left faces are respectively red, white and blue. She is eight-armed. In the right hands she shows the lotus with the *abhaya* pose, an arrow, *vajra* and a sword. The left hands show the *tarjanīpāśa*, a bow, a jewel-banner and a book held against the chest.

In the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* (TBIS, p. 40):

Mahāsitaṭatī is single-faced, red-complexioned and six-armed. She holds in the first, second and third right hands a sword, an arrow and the *varada* pose respectively. In the first, second and third left hands she shows a goad, a bow, and a lotus respectively.

II

It has already been pointed out that the iconographic features of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses worshipped in a *maṇḍala* differ from those of the goddesses worshipped independently. In the *Sādhana-mālā* there are some *sādhana*s which describe such

independent forms of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses; from the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscripts also we could find out some descriptions of some of the *rakṣā* goddesses. These we take note of under the independent forms.

In the *Sādhnamālā* the independent forms of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses are described in seven *sādhana*s (Nos.194-200), three belonging to Mahāpratisarā and the rest to the remaining four *rakṣā* goddesses. In addition to these, the independent forms are also described in the *Mahāpañcarakṣā-sādhana* (No. 201) of the *Sādhnamālā*. In the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript (No.B.35) preserved in the library of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there are two iconographic descriptions of Mahāpratisarā and Mahāmāyūrī.

In the *Sādhnamālā* we find another description of Mahāmāyūrī, not as an independent goddess, neither as a member of the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala*, but as an associate-goddess to Mahāśrī Tārā. There, however, the goddess is found to be described almost similar to the iconography of the goddess found in the *Mahāpañcarakṣā* section of the *Sādhnamālā*.

MAHAPRATISARA

The *sādhana*s Nos. 194-196 of the *Sādhnamālā* give almost the same iconographic account. The *sādhana* No. 194 is as under:

Mahāpratisarā is yellow in colour, four-faced, three-eyed and eight-handed. Her principal face is yellow, right face white, the face at the back is blue and the left face is red. Her right hands hold a sword, a discus, a trident and an arrow. Her left hands show an axe, a bow, a noose and a *vajra*. She sits in the *lalitākṣepa* attitude on a double lotus. She has a red aureole and she is adorned with all kinds of ornaments. She wears varied clothes, silken scarf and bejewelled crown.

In the *Mahāpañcarakṣā-sādhana* (*sādhana* No. 201) of the *Sādhnamālā* we find:

Mahāpratisarā has yellow complexion, three faces, each with three eyes, and ten arms. Her right and left faces are blue and white respectively. She carries in her five right hands a sword, a *vajra*, an arrow, the *varadamudrā*, and a parasol held against her chest. In her five left hands she holds a bow, a banner, a jewel, an axe and a conch. She bears the image of Ratnasambhava on the crown, has a blue jacket and a red scarf. She sits in the *ardhaparyāṅka-lālita* attitude,³ and wears celestial ornaments and garments.

In the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript (No.B.35), there occurs a stray description of Mahāpratisarā (*TBIS*, p.42). The account is as under:

Mahāpratisarā wears a crown set with diamonds and jewels, and possesses beautiful hair, graceful face, and charming eyes. The colour of her body is like

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pure gold (i.e., yellow). She holds in her hands a *vajra*, an axe, a noose, a staff, a sword, a conch, a discus and a trident. Her crown is beautified with the wishing jewel.

MAHASAHRAPRAMARDINI

The *sādhana* No. 198 of the *Sādhanamālā* describes the independent form of the goddess. The *sādhana* No. 201 also refers to this particular form and the description contained in it is the same as that of *sādhana* No.198 which is as under:

The worshipper should conceive himself as Mahāsāhasrapramardinī who has white complexion, one face and six arms. She shows in her three right hands a sword, an arrow and the *varada* pose. In three left hands she holds a bow, a noose and an axe. She is decked in novel ornaments, is full of youth and charm. She displays the sentiment of amour, bears the figure of Vairocana on her crown, and sits in the *Padmāsana* on a lotus.⁴

MAHAMAYURI

In the *sādhana* No. 197 of the *Sādhanamālā*:

The worshipper should visualise himself as Mahāmāyūrī, who has green complexion, six arms and three faces, each with three eyes. Her right and left faces are blue and white respectively. She shows in her three right hands a peacock's feather, an arrow, and the *varadamudrā*, and similarly, in the three left hands a jewel, a bow and a water vessel placed on the lap. She is decked in various ornaments, displays the sentiment of amour, is youthful, and has her seat on the lotus and she is as radiant as the moon. She sits in the *ardhaparyāṅka* attitude, and bears the image of Amoghasiddhi on the crown.

In the *sādhana* No. 201 of *Sādhanamālā* we have:

'Mahāmāyūrī has the green complexion, two hands and one face. She is divine. Her right hand holds the peacock's feather and the left shows the *varadamudrā*.' An almost similar description of Mahāmāyūrī is found in another context in the *Sādhanamālā* (p.245), where the goddess is described as an associate of Mahāśrī Tārā.

Mahāmāyūrī mayūrapicchavaradahastā.

In the *Pañcarakṣā* Ms. No.B.35 we find:

(Mahāmāyūrī) possesses the colour of gold, i.e., yellow, bears the image of the (Dhyānī) Buddha on her forehead, possesses all pure qualities and a white veil and sacred thread. She should be placed on a lotus and should be endowed

with four hands. Her lower right hand should hold a lotus and the upper right hand a rosary. In her lower left hand there should be,⁵ whereas her upper left hand should hold a peacock's feather.

MAHAMANTRANUSARINI

In the *sādhana* No. 199 of the *Sāadhanamālā* we have:

Mahāmantrānusārīṇī is four-armed, single-faced and blue in complexion. She shows in her two right hands a *vajra* and the *varadamudrā*, and in the two left hands an axe and a noose. She originates from the syllable 'Hum', bears the image of Akṣobhya on the crown and sits on and glows like the sun.

In the *sādhana* No. 201 of the *Sāadhanamālā* we see : 'Mahāmantrānusārīṇī has four hands, one face and blue complexion. Her right hands have a sword and the *varadamudrā*, and the left hands hold an axe and a noose.'

MAHASITAVATI

In the *sādhana* No. 200 of the *Sāadhanamālā* we have:

Mahāsītavatī is four-armed, single-faced and red in colour. She shows in her two right hands the rosary and the *varadamudrā*, and in her two left hands a *vajra* and a book against the chest. She originates from the syllable 'Jim', bears the image of Amitābha on the crown, sits in the *ardhaparyāṅka* attitude, and is decked in various ornaments. She sits on the orb of the sun and glows like the sun.

III

Now we can take note of the typological variations of the iconography of each of the five *rakṣā* goddesses. From our study of the iconographic descriptions of the goddesses we know that each of them has several iconic types based on the number of hands. The following is an account of the different iconic types of each of the goddesses irrespective of their position within a *maṇḍala* or their independent position.

MAHAPRATISARA

Type A I

Eight-handed; four-faced (white, yellow, red and blue) or three-faced (blue, yellow, white); body-colour either white or yellow; *lalitāsana* or *vajrāsana*; usual attributes: sword, discus, trident, arrow, axe, bow, noose, *vajra*, and sometimes staff, conch, goad as the alternatives.

86 | *Studies in Buddhist Iconography**Type A II*

Ten-handed; three-faced (blue, yellow, white); body-colour yellow; *ardhaprayaṅka-lalitākṣepa*; usual attributes : sword, *vajra*, arrow, *varada*, parasol, bow, banner, jewel, axe, conch; bears the image of Ratnasambhava on the crown.

Type A III

Twelve-handed; four-faced (white, yellow, red, blue) body-colour yellow;⁶ *vajrapary-āṅkāśana*; attributes : jewel, discus, *vajra*, arrow, sword, *varada*, *vajra*, noose, trident, bow, axe, conch.

MAHASAHRAPRAMARDINI

Type B I

Six-handed; white complexioned; single-faced; attributes: sword, arrow, *varada*, bow, noose, axe; bears the image of Vairocana on the crown.

Type B II

Eight hands; four faces (white, blue, green and yellow or red); body-colour blue; seated in *lalitākṣepa* attitude; attributes : *varada*, goad, arrow, sword, *tarjanīpāśa* or simple *pāśa*, axe, bow, sixteen jewels, lotus, *vajra* or double *vajra*, etc.

Type B III

Ten hands; four faces (white, blue, red and yellow); body-colour white; seated in *lalitākṣepa* attitude; attributes: discus, *varada*, goad, arrow, sword, *vajra*, *tarjanī-mudrā*, noose, bow, noose.

MAHAMAYURI

Type C I

Two-handed; green-complexioned; single-faced, attributes : either peacock's feather and *varada* or book and lotus.

Type C II

Four-armed; body colour white; holds a lotus, a rosary, a *Vilva* fruit and a peacock's feather; bears the image of the Dhyānī Buddha (Amoghasiddhi ?) on the forehead.

Type C III

Six hands; three faces (blue, green and white); body-colour green; seated in *ardhaparyāṅka* attitude; attributes: peacock's feather, arrow, *varada*, jewel, bow, water vessel on the lap; bears the image of Amoghasiddhi on the crown.

Type C IV

Eight-handed; three faces (blue, yellow, red or white, green, blue, or yellow-green, red); body-colour either yellow or green; sits in the *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*; attributes: *varada*, vessel of gems, discus, sword, mendicant on bowl, peacock's feather, bell, banner and sometimes bow and arrow, jewel, lotus, or the gesture of applying vermilion on the forehead.

MAHAMANTRANUSARINI

Type D I

Four-handed; body-colour blue; single-faced; attributes: *vajra* or sword, *varada*, axe and a noose; often bears the image of Akṣobhya on the crown.

Type D II

Twelve-handed; three-faced (white, blue and red or green); body-colour white, blue or green; seated in *vajraparyāṅkāśana* attitude; attributes either (a) *dharmacakramudrā*, *samādhimudrā*, *varada*, *abhaya*, *vajra*, arrow, bow, *tarjanīpāśa*, jewel and vessel marked with lotus; or (b) *dharmacakramudrā*, vessel of jewels, sword, lotus, bow, arrow, double *vajra*, bell, *abhayamudrā* and a noose.

MAHASITAVATI

Type E I

Four-handed; single-faced; body-colour red; *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*; attributes: rosary, *varada*, *vajra* and a book; bears the image of the Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha on the crown.

Type E II

Six-handed; three faces (white, green and red) only when the body-colour is green; body-colour green or red; attributes when green: *abhaya*, *vajra*, arrow, *tarjanīpāśa*, bow and banner; attributes when body-colour is red: sword, arrow, *varada*, goad, bow and a lotus; bears the image of Amitābha on the crown.

88 | *Studies in Buddhist Iconography**Type E III*

Eight-handed; three-faced (white, red, blue); body-colour red; *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*; attributes: lotus with *abhayaṃudrā*, arrow, *vajra*, sword, *tarjanīpāśa*, bow, jewel-banner and a book.

IV

It has already been pointed out that there is another class of materials for the study of the iconography of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses. This includes the artistic representations of the goddesses. We know of quite a number of such representations either in sculpture or in painting. Among the sculptural representations of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses, mention should first be made of the two images of Mahāpratisarā, one preserved in the Dacca Museum (Plate 27) and the other in the Dacca Sahitya Parisat. Clark reproduces the photographs of two sculptural representations of 'Pratisarā' found from China.⁷ An image (Plate 27), preserved in the Archaeological Museum at Nālandā has been identified by Mrs. Debala Mitra as an image of Mahāmāyūrī.⁸ Mrs. Mitra also refers to four two-armed figures of Mahāmāyūrī (Plate 28) represented in relief carvings in caves Nos. 6,8,10, and 12 at Ellora.⁹ Gordon reproduces the photograph of a Tibetan specimen of a sculpture of Mahāmāyūrī.¹⁰ A Chinese example of the sculptural representation of Mahāmāyūrī has been photographed in Clark's book.¹¹ In addition to these, we would later examine a few other 'possible representations' of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses in sculpture.

Examples of sculptural representations of the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala* are very rare. Gordon, however, reproduces the photograph of such a rare representation.¹² In painting, however, the representations of the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala* are often found. Bhattacharyya reproduces a Nepalese painting of the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala*¹³ (Plate 26). Roerich also refers to a Tibetan painting of the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala*.¹⁴ Moreover, the pictorial representations of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses in a series in manuscripts may also be the illustrations of the *Pañcarakṣā-maṇḍala*, although not precisely in a *maṇḍala* format.

A large number of manuscripts illustrating the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses have been found. Among the illustrated *Pañcarakṣā* manuscripts known so far, the earliest is perhaps the Cambridge University manuscript (No. Add. 1688), copied in the fourteenth year of king Nayapāladeva of the Pāla dynasty, who is placed in the latter half of the eleventh century A.D.¹⁵ Almost contemporaneous is the Asutosh Museum manuscript (No. T. 1055), copied, according to the colophon, in the Newari Śaṃvat 225 (A.D. 1105) during the reign of Sihadeva, king of Nepal.¹⁶ Another manuscript belonging to the same Museum (Ms. No. T. 140) was copied during the reign of Śivadeva who ruled during the Newari Śaṃvat 239 (A.D. 1119). The illustrated *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript brought to the notice by Shirley M. Black¹⁷ also probably belongs to the first quarter of the twelfth century A.D., though, of course, the

manuscript contains the date 39 in Nepali era, put evidently by a later hand. A beautifully illustrated *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript (Ms. No. Hodgson 8 R), ascribed to the twelfth century A.D. is now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.¹⁸ In the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, there are three illustrated *Pañcarakṣā* manuscripts of which the most important is one (Ms. B. 35) copied in the Newari Samvat 385 (A.D. 1265), during the reign of Jayabhīmadeva. Another (Ms. G. 4078) was copied in the Śaka era 1211 (A.D. 1289) during the reign of Gauḍeśvara Madhusena. The third (Ms. B.4) was copied in the Newari Samvat 944 (A.D. 1824). In this connection we have also to refer to the Cambridge University manuscript (No. Add. 1647) of the *Pañcarakṣā* belonging to the sixteenth century. We also know of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses illustrated in a manuscript belonging to the collection of Dr. Evans Wentz,¹⁹ an American Anthropologist.

Only a few of the above-mentioned manuscripts have been studied so far. The Cambridge manuscript No. Add. 1688, Asutosh Museum manuscript Nos. T. 1055 and T. 140, the Bodleian manuscript, and the manuscripts in the collection of Shirley M. Black and Dr. Evans Wentz have only been studied in different publications.²⁰ The illustrations of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses contained in these manuscripts have only been described. But the illustrations of one manuscript have hardly been compared with those of the others. As a result, a comprehensive idea about the iconography of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses contained in the illustrated manuscripts has not yet been obtained.

V

The artistic representations of the *Pañcarakṣā* goddesses show the following iconic types.

MAHAPRATISARA

Type A I

Eight hands; sometimes three faces as in Asutosh Museum images (Plate 29), Cambridge Add. 1688 (Plate 30), two Dacca images (Plate 27) and the image reproduced in Clark's plate 190; and at others, four faces as in Bodleian manuscript, Ms. of Evans Wentz; colour of the three faces: blue, white, yellow; red, white, green (as in Bodleian manuscript and Ms. B.4); always white body-colour; usually seated in the Bodleian manuscript and Ms. B.4; but there are a few variations, e.g., *lalitāsana* in Clark's plate 190, *sattvaparyāṅkāśana* in Dacca Museum and Sahitya Parisat images; there is great divergence, so far as the attributes of the hands are concerned; the following is the account of the attributes in hands:

(a) Asutosh Museum manuscript: a pair of hands held near the breast (T.1055); other attributes are sword, bow, arrow, *vajra*, discus, trident, etc. (Plate 29). (b) Cambridge Ms. Add. 1688: sword, arrow, bow; other attributes are indistinct.

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(Plate 30). (c) Bodleian Ms.: discus, lasso, sword, bow, arrow, *vajra*, axe, and trident.²¹ (d) Ms. B.4: sword, arrow, *vajra*, jewel-banner, bow, trident, the attributes of the principal hands not clear (Plate 31). (e) Ms., of Evans Wentz: principal hands held near the breast with a bell, sword, arrow, *varada*, bow, etc. (*IBI*, Fig. 196). (f) Dacca Museum image : sword, arrow, trident, discus, bow, *vajra*, lasso, *tarjanī* (Plate 27). (g) A Chinese specimen: principal hands in *dharmacakra*, sword, trident, arrow, bow, axe and a noose.²² (h) Cambridge Ms. Add. 1647: sword, arrow, axe, bow, trident, crouch (?), *vajra* (?) and lasso (?).

There are some notable features: In the Dacca Sahitya Parisat image and in Ms. B. 4 image (Plate 31) the goddess has two lions as the *vāhana*, in the former, the lions are depicted on the face of the pedestal. In the pedestal of Dacca Sahitya Parisat image, there is the representation of Gaṇeśa in the crawling pose.

Other Possible Types

(a) Two-handed; single-faced; *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*; holding sword and discus.²³ (b) Six-handed; single-faced; white in colour; *lalitāsana*; showing sword, arrow, *varada* pose, etc., and one hand placed near the breast, the other on the lap; in Ms. G. 4078.

MAHASA HASRAPRAMARDINI

Type B I

Six-handed; attributes: sword, *tarjanīmudrā*, arrow, *varada* pose, bow and a noose; stands in the *Pratyālīḍha*, as noticed in Cambridge Ms. Add. 1688 (Plate 30). Some variation is noticed in the image reproduced by Clark in his book;²⁴ instead of the *tarjanīmudrā*, there is a pot with a lid, and instead of *pratyālīḍha* attitude, here *vajraparyāṅkāśana* is noticed. Another peculiar feature of this illustration is that the goddess is shown here with a serene mien, though in almost all other illustrations she is shown as frightening.

Type B II

Eight-handed; four-faced; body-colour blue; all these features are found in her illustrations in Ms. B. 35 (Plate 32), T. 1055, Bodleian Ms., Cambridge Add. 1647 (Plate 33), B. 4, and the Ms. of Evans Wentz. Except in T. 1055, in all other cases the goddess is shown as trampling on two male figures. Only in the case of B. 35 (Plate 32) there seems to be only one such crouching figure, and that too of a female being. Mss. Add. 1647 and T. 1055 show a peculiar posture: in the former, the left knee is bent and touches the seat, while in the latter, the right knee is in such a position; in both the cases, the other leg has a bent knee.

The following are the attributes in the different illustrations:

(a) B. 35—*vajra*, *tarjanīpāśa*, sword, arrow, elephant's goad, axe, bow and a jewel (Plate 32). (b) T.1055—sword, arrow, goad, *vajra*, *tarjanīmudrā*, lotus with something (a jewel?) on it, bow and axe. (c) Bodleian Ms.—main pair has a double *vajra* in each of the hands; others hold lasso, bow, arrow, trident, lotus and an axe.²⁵ (d) B. 4—sword, arrow, trident, *vajra*, lasso, goad, bow and a discus (Plate 31). (e) Add. 1647—same as above (Plate 33). (f) Evans Wentz's Ms.—sword, arrow, bow, *vajra* and other attributes not very distinct (*IBI*, Fig. 197).

Type B III

Ten-handed goddess seated in the *vajraparyāṅkāsana* and with a serene expression illustrated in T. 140 of the Asutosh Museum.²⁶

Other Possible Types

Four-handed; single-faced; blue-coloured; seated in the *lalitāsana*; principal right hand probably in the *tarjanīmudrā*, and the principal left placed on the lap; attributes in the remaining two hands not distinct; belongs to Ms. G. 4078 (Plate 34).

MAHAMAYURI

Type C I

Two-handed, single-faced—represented in caves Nos. 6,8,10, and 12 at Ellora.²⁷ The goddess stands in the *samapada* attitude in caves 6 and 8. Attributes of the goddess in caves 6, 10 and 8: peacock's feather and *ratnaghāṭa*; those in cave 12: *varada* and peacock's feather; the goddess is accompanied by a peacock and a monk in caves 6 and 8 (Plate 28).

Type C II

Four-handed, single-faced; seated in *lalitāsana* and there is a peacock on the left side;²⁸ the attributes in the two right and lower left missing, upper left hand holds a peacock's feather; only one such image of the goddess has been found which is now preserved in the Archaeological Museum at Nālandā²⁹ (Plate 2).

Type C III

Six-handed and three-faced, this type of image is found in Cambridge Ms. Add. 1688 (Plate 30). The Cambridge Ms. image is seated in the *vajraparyāṅkāsana* and a similar image is also referred to by Clark; the image reproduced by Clark is

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seated in the *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*. The Cambridge manuscript image shows peacock's feather, *jñānamudrā*, arrow, *varada*, *vajra*, bow, *tarjanī* pose, *varada*, noose, pot and another indistinct object, and a peacock's feather in Clark's illustration.

Type C IV

Eight-handed, this type is found in B. 35, T. 1055, Ms. of Bodleian,³⁰ Cambridge 1647, B. 4, Evans Wentz's and G. 4078. Always three-faced, except in the last three cases—in B. 4 and Evans Wentz's four faces, in G. 4078 single face; yellow complexioned; always *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, except in two cases : in G. 4078, *lalitāsana* and in Evans Wentz's, *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*.

The attributes are as follow : (a) B. 35—*varada*, pot, sword, banner, peacock's feather and some other indistinct objects. (b) G. 4078—discus, a pot with something on it, sword, arrow, *varada*, bow, lasso, one hand placed on the thigh (Plate 35). (c) T. 1055—cup with effigy of a figure on it, banner, pot with double *vajra*, peacock's tail, *varada*, sword, discus and a pot. (d) Bodleian—*varada*, sword, lotus, banner, peacock's tail, bow, quadruple thunderbolt. (e) B. 4—sword, discus, *vajra* (?), *varada*, book and *caitya* (?), peacock's feather and a vessel (Plate 36). (f) Cambridge Add. 1647—sword, *vajra*, some unidentifiable object, *varada*, banner, vessel, peacock's feather and a pot on the lap with the head of *bhikṣu* (?) on it.

Other Possible Types

Ten-handed form mentioned by Monotosh Mukherjee;³¹ this type of image is found in the Ms. T. 140 of the Asutosh Museum. Mr. Mukherjee does not describe the image fully, and, unfortunately, the illustration was also not available to the present author for examination and study. The only notable point in Mr. Mukherjee's description is that the goddess holds a bowl in her right hand, but unlike her illustration in T. 1055, here the bowl is empty.

MAHAMANTRANUSARINI

Type D I

Four-handed and single-faced, this type is found in G. 4078, Cambridge Add. 1688 and Clark's book; *lalitāsana* in the last case; attributes—G. 4078 : *varada*, rosary, book and an indistinct object; Add. 1688 : rosary, staff, *varada* and a book (Plate 37). Clark : *varada*, book, lotus and one hand held near the breast.

Type D II

Represented by B. 35, T. 1055, B. 4, Cambridge Add. 1647, Bodleian manuscript,³² Evans Wentz's and a thirteenth century manuscript of *Pañcarakṣā* now in the

Asutosh Museum. Always twelve-handed and four-faced, except in T. 1055, B 35 and the thirteenth century Asutosh Museum manuscript, which show only three faces (probably the face at the back being invisible from the front has not been represented). The colour of the goddess in this form is usually red, but there is exception, e.g., where the colour is white.³³ Always in *vajraparyāṅkāśana*.

The attributes are as under:

(a) B. 35—one pair of hands *dharmacakramudrā*, another pair, *samādhimudrā*; arrow, *vajra*, *abhaya*, *varada*, bow, *tarjanī* pose, jewel and rosary. (b) Bodleian—*vajra*, arrow, discus, book, lasso, peacock's tail (?) and one pair of hands in the *samādhimudrā* with bowl. (c) B. 4—one pair in *dharmacakra* pose, another *samādhimudrā* with a bowl, arrow, *vajra*, lotus, *varada*, bow, lasso, vase, *tarjanī* pose (Plate 38). (d) Cambridge Add. 1647—one pair of hands in *dharmacakra*, another in *samādhimudrā* with a bowl, sword, *vajra*, *abhaya*, *varada*, bow, arrow, lotus and lasso (Plate 39). (e) Evans Wentz's—one pair in *dharmacakra*, another in *samādhimudrā*, arrow, rosary, *abhaya*, *varada*, lasso, bow, etc. (*IBI*, Plate 198). (f) Asutosh Museum manuscript—one pair *dharmacakra*, another *samādhimudrā*, sword, arrow, *abhaya*, *varada*, bow, *tarjanīpāśa*, etc.

MAHASITAVATI

Type E I

Reproduced by Cambridge Add. 1688 (Plate 30) and an illustration given by Clark. Four-handed, single-faced, *vajraparyāṅkāśana*. Attributes in the former: rosary, pot, *varada*, trident; in the latter: rosary, *varada*, book and an axe.

Type E II

Represented by B. 35, G. 4078, T. 1055, Bodleian,³⁴ B. 4, Evans Wentz's, Cambridge Add. 1647, and two other manuscripts of the Asutosh Museum, one belonging to the thirteenth and the other to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Six-handed and three-faced, except in G. 4078, where single-faced; usually seated in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, except in G. 4078, where seated in the *lalitāśana*.

The attributes are:

(a) B. 35—*abhaya*, *tarjanī*, sword, staff, arrow and *vajra*. (b) G. 4078—*varada*, banner, bow, *tarjanī* pose, one hand placed on the thigh, and the emblem of the other hand not ascertainable. (c) T. 1055—*varada*, arrow, *vajra*, *tarjanī* pose, arrow and a staff. (d) Bodleian—bow, arrow, lasso, banner, *vajra* and a bell; the last two held in the manner in which *Vajrasattva* is usually represented. (e) B. 4—arrow,

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vajra, *abhaya*, bow, bell and a pot placed on lap. (f) Cambridge Add. 1647—arrow, *vajra*, *abhaya*, bow, banner (?), lasso (Plate 40). (g) Evans Wentz's—arrow, *vajra*, *abhaya*, trident(?), or banner (?), bow, and one hand placed on the lap holding probably a pot (*IBI*, Fig 199). (h) Asutosh Museum manuscript belonging to the thirteenth and fifteenth century—arrow, *vajra*, *abhaya*, bow, banner and a lasso.

VI

According to the texts, Mahāpratisarā may be eight, ten or twelve-handed. But in actual depiction we find her in two, six and eight-handed forms. We have not found any image of the goddess with ten or twelve hands, or any description of her two or six-handed forms. In this context mention should be made of a rare feature of the Dacca Sahitya Parisat image of Mahāpratisarā. In the pedestal of this image, (*IBI*, Fig. 184) there is the representation of a crawling figure of Gaṇeśa. For this we do not have any textual prescription. It is very difficult to explain this peculiar feature. Bhattacharyya has, however, explained it as an evidence of the sectarian enmity between the tāntric Buddhists and the followers of the Brahmanical faith. According to him, the Buddhists, in order to display their aversion to the followers of the Brahmanical faith, made their goddess Mahāpratisarā trample upon Gaṇeśa, who is *siddhidātā* (bestower of perfection or success) to the Brahmanists, but *vighna* (obstacle) to the Buddhists.³⁵

According to the texts, Mahāsāhasrapramardinī may be six, eight, and ten-handed. In addition to all these three forms, we find the four-handed form of the goddess in her actual representation. For the last-mentioned form we have yet to discover a textual corroboration. Mahāmāyūrī is described in texts as two, four, six, and eight-handed. All these forms of the goddess are represented in art. In addition to these forms, we also know of her ten-handed images, for which textual support has not yet been found.

Mrs. Debala Mitra, by identifying a Nālandā image as that of Mahāmāyūrī, showed for the first time that the Goddess Mahāmāyūrī could have also a four-handed form.³⁶ But Mrs. Mitra could not cite any textual description in support of her identification, although she had anticipated the existence of such a description lying hidden in some unpublished manuscripts. That her anticipation was correct is evident from the fact that from the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript No. B. 35, preserved in the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, such a description of the four-handed form (*caturbhujā*) of the goddess Mahāmāyūrī was found out by the present writer and brought to the notice of scholars for the first time.³⁷ It is interesting to note that, although the Ms. B. 35 describes Mahāmāyūrī as four-handed (*caturbhujā*), she is illustrated in the same manuscript with eight hands. Mahāmantrānusārīṇī is either four or twelve-handed, according to the textual description. In actual representation also, these two forms of the goddess are known. Mahāsītavatī is described in the texts as four, six or eight-handed. Except for the last-mentioned form, the other two forms of the goddess are represented in the illustrations.

A critical study of the textual accounts and of the images of the Pañcarakṣā goddesses leads us to make the following observations: (a) Five colours, e.g., white, yellow, blue, red and green, have been assigned, both in theory and practice, to the five rakṣā goddesses. Ascription of a particular colour to one goddess is not rigidly followed. The same colour is often shared by more than one goddesses at different contexts. (b) The colour of the principal face of each of the goddesses generally follows the body-colour of that goddess. (c) The goddesses are mostly endowed with more than two hands each and often with more than one face, although there are some exceptions also. (d) All the goddesses, except Mahāsāhasrapramardinī, are peaceful in appearance and represent the serene aspects of nature. There are also a few representations of Mahāsāhasrapramardinī with a serene expression. (e) The goddesses are almost always found, both in texts and images, to be in the sitting posture. The texts invariably ascribe to them some kind of sitting attitude. Only three examples of the standing images are known to us: the image of Mahāsāhasrapramardinī in the Cambridge Ms. Add. 1688 (Plate 30) and the two images of Mahāmāyūrī carved in caves 6 and 8 at Ellora (Plate 28). (f) The goddesses are generally ascribed a lotus-seat when they are described or depicted as seated. The texts, however, mention sometimes the moon or the sun as the seat of the goddesses. But in actual depiction, the goddesses are almost always found to be seated on a lotus, often a double-petalled lotus. There are, however, some images of the rakṣā goddesses which are found to be seated on peacocks, lions, garuḍas, horses, and crouching men or women.

It is to be mentioned that the *Sādhanamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* do not prescribe for the incorporation of any such mount to the rakṣā goddesses. The *Sādhanamālā*, however, describes the goddess Mahāsāhasrapramardinī as trampling upon the evil spirits, the *bhūtas* and the *yakṣas* (*mahābhūtamahāyākṣānākramamānā*). An echo of this is also found in the *Pañcarakṣā* Ms. (*Mahāsāhasrakāyena mardditā yakṣarākṣasāḥ; yakṣakoṭisahasrāṇi vidyāpāśenākarṣitā*).³⁸ As a matter of fact, those images in which Mahāsāhasrapramardinī is shown as trampling upon some male or female figures, are to be regarded as the iconographic interpretation of that aspect of the goddess in which she is conceived as the destroyer of the evil spirits like the *bhūtas* and the *yakṣas*.

The very name of the goddess Mahāmāyūrī is suggestive of her close connection with the bird, *mayūra*, i.e., the peacock. This connection seems to be very logical in view of the fact that the goddess is believed to be the deification of a magic formula, called the 'Golden Peacock Charm', used by the faithful to ensure protection from snake-bites.³⁹ And it is well-known that the bird *mayūra* (peacock) is a relentless enemy of snakes. Thus the goddess Mahāmāyūrī, like the peacock, seems to be a veritable protectress against snakes, and hence the name of the goddess Mahāmāyūrī being derived from the name of the bird *mayūra* (peacock) seems also to be very logical.

As the relation between the goddess and the bird referred to above is not merely nominal but also to some extent ideological, it is quite natural that iconographic expressions of this aspect of the goddess are also to be expected in her

artistic representations. The study of the images of Mahāmāyūrī shows that the goddess almost invariably holds a peacock's feather (*mayūrapicca*) in one of her hands. This shows that the peacock is iconographically related to Mahāmāyūrī. The intimacy of this relationship becomes more evident when some images of the goddess are found to depict the peacock either as her mount (*vāhana*) or as an associate. The image of the goddess represented in caves 10 and 12 at Ellora depicts the peacock as the mount of the goddess, whereas, in caves 6 and 8 at Ellora, the peacock appears only as her associate.⁴⁰ The peacock also figures as an associate of Mahāmāyūrī in an image of the goddess preserved in the Archaeological Museum at Nālandā (Fig. 2). In Japan, Mahāmāyūrī, known there as Kujaku Myo-o, is almost always figured as seated on a peacock.⁴¹ Gordon also illustrates a Tibetan image of Mahāmāyūrī seated on a peacock.

It is to be mentioned that both the *Sādhnamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* prescribe the peacock's feather (*mayūrapicca*) as an attribute in one of the hands of Mahāmāyūrī.⁴² But as the *Sādhnamālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* do not mention the peacock either as the mount (*vāhana*) or as an associate of Mahāmāyūrī, the presence of the peacock in some of the images of the goddess referred to above lacked literary corroboration. Alice Getty, however, refers to Japanese Buddhist *sādhana*s describing the goddess Mahāmāyūrī as seated on the peacock.⁴³ It has to be pointed out that such a prescription is also recorded in a *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript, dated in the Newari Samvat 944 (A.D. 1824). The goddess is invoked there as follows: *Mayūrākrāntāya (mayūrākrāntāyai) Mahāmāyūryai vidyārājñai svāhā*.⁴⁴ This means: 'Invocation to Mahāmāyūrī, the queen of the spell, who is seated on or accompanied by a peacock'. In a manuscript of the *Dhāraṇī-Saṃgraha*, there occurs a similar invocation with reference to the goddess Mahāmāyūrī: *Mahāmāyūrī (Mahāmāyūryai) vidyārājñiya (vidyārājñai) svāhā, Mayūrākrāntāya (mayūrākrāntāyai) svāhā*.⁴⁵

The word, 'ākraṇta' means approached, frequented, visited, on which anything lies heavily, etc.⁴⁶ So the expression 'mayūrākrāntā' may well mean one who is frequented or visited by the peacock, or one who lies heavily, i.e., sits on a peacock. Whatever might be the actual meaning of the expression 'mayūrākrāntā', used with reference to Mahāmāyūrī in the above-mentioned textual documents, there can hardly be any doubt that the aforesaid expression alludes to the conception of the goddess Mahāmāyūrī as seated on or accompanied by the peacock.

In this context we should mention that in the illustrated *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript (No. B. 4) the five *rakṣā* goddesses are represented as having the *vāhanas*: lion, horse, peacock, garuḍa and human beings (Plates 31, 36, 38). The presence of the peacock with Mahāmāyūrī has been explained above with textual references.⁴⁷ The presence of lions, etc., with the *rakṣā* goddesses still has to be explained. It is interesting that regarding the *āsanas* (sitting position as well as the seat) of the *rakṣā* goddesses the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha* states that all the goddesses should be in the *vajrāsana*; in some places they are represented as seated on lions etc., and in some cases Mahāsāhasrapramardinī sits in the *lalitāsana* (*sarvā api vajrāsana kutrācit simhādyaśanā kutrācit sāhasrapramardanyā lalitāsana*).⁴⁸ The mention of the lions, etc.,

as the mounts of the *rakṣā* goddesses no doubt explains the presence of these animals in the artistic representations of the goddesses in Ms. B. 4, but it is to be admitted that this feature was incorporated very late, probably to rationalise the iconography of the *rakṣā* goddesses with that of the Dhyānī Buddhas with whom they are associated and who are often described and represented as having the lion, peacock, garuḍa, elephant, horse, etc. as their mounts.⁴⁹ But that proper rationalisation could not have been done is apparent from the fact that the associate animal of Amoghasiddhi, the Dhyānī Buddha of Mahāmāyūrī, is a garuḍa, instead of the peacock.⁵⁰ But in one way the rationalisation was successful, because like the peacock, the divine bird garuḍa is also an enemy of snakes,⁵¹ for destroying whose venom the goddess Mahāmāyūrī is worshipped.

The texts invariably describe the Pañcarakṣā goddesses as seated in a specific attitude (*āsana*). Usually the following attitudes are assigned to them: *Vajraparyāṅkāśana*, *lalitāsana*, *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, and *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*. In actual depiction, however, they generally appear to be seated either in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana* or in the *lalitāsana*. We also know of a single example of the goddess Mahāpratisarā being represented as seated in the *mahārājāḷāsana*.⁵² The *āsana*, '*sattvaparyāṅkāśana*' has been ascribed both by the *Sādhanaṁālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* to the goddess Mahāmāyūrī. But it is found that in actual depiction, Mahāmāyūrī is seated either in the *vajraparyāṅkāśana* or in the *lalitāsana*. But Mahāmāyūrī, in Evans Wentz's manuscript illustration, is found to be seated in a peculiar mode which, though close to *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, does not exactly tally with the latter. The goddess is found to be seated in an attitude in which the legs are not locked, but they are placed one above the other with the right sole being only visible (*IBI*, fig. 200). The two sculptured images of Mahāpratisarā, preserved in the Dacca Museum and in the Dacca Sahitya Parisat, are also found to be seated in this mode (Fig. 27). It appears that this is the mode of sitting for which the *Sādhanaṁālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* use the term '*sattvaparyāṅkāśana*'. M.T. de Mallmann has also given this interpretation of *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*.⁵³ Bhattacharyya, however, interprets *sattvaparyāṅkāśana* as 'seated on a man'⁵⁴ and as 'seated on an animal'⁵⁵ in two different places. But his former interpretation seems to be wrong in view of the fact that in none of the illustrations the goddess is found to be seated on a man. In some of her illustrations, Mahāmāyūrī is, however, found to be seated on a peacock, no doubt an animal in the broader sense of the term, but that cannot be in any way a reason for interpreting '*sattvaparyāṅkāśana*' as 'seated on an animal'.

As stated both by the *Sādhanaṁālā* and the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, a remarkable iconographic feature of Mahāmāyūrī is that the goddess holds 'a mendicant on the bowl' (*pātropari bhikṣuḥ*). Before the publication of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, Bhattacharyya took the expression '*pātropari bhikṣuḥ*' of the *Sādhanaṁālā* to be erroneous and suggested that the expression should be taken to mean 'the fruit on the bowl',⁵⁶ because the manuscript illustrations, which he could study, showed, according to him, some fruits, instead of a mendicant, on a bowl held by Mahāmāyūrī. But the reference of the above-mentioned expression in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* probably convinced Bhattacharyya of the correctness of the expression of the *Sādhanaṁālā*,

and, as such, he translated the expression as 'a mendicant on the bowl' in the second edition of his book.⁵⁷

The above-mentioned iconographic feature of Mahāmāyūrī is found in her illustrations in Mss. T.1055, B. 35 and Add. 1647 (Plate 42). The goddess represented in Ms.T.140 and the Bodleian Ms. holds a pot which is probably empty,⁵⁸ while the Tibetan painting of *Pañcaraṣkā-maṇḍala*, described by Roerich, also shows Mahāmāyūrī as 'holding a bowl with the head of a Buddha'.⁵⁹

In the *Dharmakoṣa-Saṃgraha*, as we have already seen, Mahāmāyūrī is assigned a very peculiar hand pose in which she is supposed to show the attitude of applying vermilion on the forehead (*sindūrārpaṇam*). This is not mentioned in any other textual accounts, nor is this attitude found in any of her known representations. In fact, this peculiar hand-pose (*mudrā*) is very rare in Indian iconography. It is, however, very tempting to refer in this connection to a twelve-armed image of a goddess found from Uttar Pradesh. The most striking feature of this image is that one of the hands of the goddess shows the attitude of applying vermilion on the forehead (Plate 41). Most of the hands of this image being broken it is not possible to ascertain its other attributes, and, as such, its identification. It is a twelve-handed image, and we do not have the knowledge of any twelve-handed form of Mahāmāyūrī. But as the image in question exhibits the rare hand-pose of applying vermilion (*sindūrārpaṇam*), it is tempting to identify the same as that of Mahāmāyūrī. The possibility of the prescription of a twelve-armed form of the goddess lying in the unexplored literary mass cannot be ruled out.⁶⁰

According to the *Sādhanamālā*, Mahāpratisarā, Mahāsāhasrapramardinī, Mahāmāyūrī, Mahāmantrānusāriṇī and Mahāsītavatī should possess on their crowns the Dhyānī Buddhas Ratnasambhava, Vairocana, Amoghasiddhi, Akṣobhya and Amitābha respectively. But it is curious that this particular iconographic feature does not appear in any one of the representations of the *Pañcaraṣkā* goddesses known to us, although the Dhyānī Buddhas are quite frequently represented in a group either on the covers or on separate folios of the manuscripts of the *Pañcaraṣkā*.

The *Sādhanamālā* states that each of the goddesses of the *Pañcaraṣkā-maṇḍala* should be adorned with a particular tree, e.g., Mahāpratisarā with *Bodhi* tree, Mahāsāhasrapramardinī with *Bo* tree, Mahāmāyūrī with *Asoka* tree, Mahāmantrānusāriṇī with *Śirīṣa* tree, and Mahāsītavatī with *Campaka* tree. This aspect of the goddess is found to be present in the illustrations in Ms. T. 1055.⁶¹ Clark illustrates the *Pañcaraṣkā* goddesses having in each of the illustrations a different type of tree.⁶²

NOTES

1. Ms. G. 8055, fols. 29B-30A.
2. Ms. G. 3855, fol. 61b.

3. *Ardhaparyāṅkalalita* presumably means that out of the two types of *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*, namely, *lalitāśana* and *mahārājālāsana*, the goddess is seated in the former attitude.
4. *Padma* and *candra* are often used as synonyms. So, it is not unlikely that *padmucandrāsana* means the lotus (*padma*) seat as well as the lotus posture (*candrāsana*/*padmāsana*) which in Buddhist Iconography is the same as the *vajrāsana* or *vajraparyāṅkāśana*, i.e., the mode of sitting in which the legs are crossed with both the soles being visible.
5. It is not possible to know from the above-mentioned extract what object Mahāmāyūrī should hold in her lower left hand, because the portion of the text supposed to give the required information is extremely damaged. But in another Ms. of the *Pañcarakṣā*, now preserved in the India Office Library, London, this portion of the text is clear, and the attribute mentioned there is a *vilva* fruit. This was not known to the author at the time when he incorporated the materials of the *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript in his *TBIS*, p. 42. The India Office Library Ms. was personally consulted by the present author after the publication of his *TBIS*.
6. It is almost invariably found that the body colour of the goddess is the same as the colour of the principal face or vice versa.
7. *TLP*, plates 190 and 216.
8. Mitra, D., Iconographic notes, *JAS*, Vol. I, No. I, 1957, pp. 37 ff.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Gordon, A.K., *The Iconography of Tibetan Lamaism*, New York, 1939, plate facing page 74.
11. *TLP*, plate 206.
12. Gordon, op. cit., plate facing page 76.
13. *NSP*, plate II, facing p. 53.
14. Roerich, G., *Tibetan Paintings*, Paris, 1925, pp. 69 ff.
15. *JISOA*, Vol. XV, p. 94.
16. Saraswati, S.K., Sihadeva, a forgotten king of Nepal, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 10th session, Bombay, 1947, p. 252.
17. *Oriental Art*, Vol. XIII, No. 2, 1967, pp. 107-12.
18. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, No. 4, plates I & II.
19. *IBI*, Figs. 196-200.
20. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 4 and Vol. XIII, No. 2; *JISOA*, Vol. XV; *IBI*, Figs. 196-200.
21. *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 141 ff.
22. *TLP*, plate 190.
23. *Ibid.*, plate 216.
24. *TLP*, plate 205.
25. Stooke, H. J., 'A 12th Century Pañcarakṣā Maṇḍala', *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 141 ff.
26. *JISOA*, Vol. XV. (1947).
27. *JASB*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1959, pp. 37 ff.
28. Most probably there were two peacocks. There is a faint trace of a bird's (peacock's) beak on the side which is extremely damaged. See *JAS*, Vol. I, No. 1, Pl. Ia.
29. See Note 27.
30. This has been wrongly identified by Stooke as Mahāsītavātī. See *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 141 ff.
31. *JISOA*, Vol. XV (1947).
32. Stooke wrongly identified it as Mahāmāyūrī. See *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 141 ff.
33. *JISOA*, Vol. XV (1947).
34. Stooke wrongly identified it as Mahāmantrānusārīṇī, see *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 4.
35. *NSP*, Introduction, pp. 20 ff.
36. *JASB*, Vol. I, No. I, 1959, pp. 37 ff.
37. *JAS*, Vol. VI, No. I, 1964, pp. 1-3. See also *TBIS*, pp. 4, 42 and 66.
38. Ms. B. 35, folios 66A and 68A.
39. *GNB*, p. 136.
40. *JASB*, Vol. I, No. I, 1959, pp. 37 ff. See also Gupte, R.S., *The Iconography of the Buddhist*

Sculptures (Caves) of Ellora, Aurangabad, 1964, p. 114. Gupte, however, describes only the images of the goddess in caves 6, 8, and 10.

41. *GNB*, p. 137.
42. *SM*, p. 400; *NSP*, p. 42.
43. *GNB*, p. 137.
44. Ms. B. 4. fol. 139A. See also *TBIS*, p. 42.
45. Ms. B. 5, fol. 112B. See also *TBIS*, p. 42.
46. Williams, M.M., *A Sanskrit—English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1956, p. 128.
47. It is bewildering that the peacock is not associated in B. 4. with Mahāmāyūrī, but that has been ascribed to Mahāmāntrānusāriṇī. Mahāmāyūrī, there, has been assigned two horses as th mount.
48. Ms. G. 8055, fol. 30A. See also *TBIS*, p. 41.
49. *NSP*, pp. 48, 54; *IBI*, Figs, 196-200.
50. *NSP*, pp. 48, 54; *GNB*, p. 28; the *Advayavajra* tradition referred to by Bhattacharyya, see *IBI*, p. 55.
51. In fact, Garuḍa and Sarpa are two step brothers, the former is the son of Vinatā, the latter of Kadru, the co-wives of Kāśyapa, and the daughters of the king Dakṣa.
52. *TLP*, Fig. 216.
53. Mallmann, M.T.de., *Introduction L'Etude D'Avalokiteśvara*, Paris, 1948, pp. 258-60; this *āsana*, occasionally found in north India in earlier times, is used throughout south India for seated Buddha and Bodhisattva images in place of the *vajraparyāṅkāśana*. See Barret, D. *Sculptures From Amarāvātī in the British Museum*, London, 1954, p. 57, foot note 3.
54. *IBI*, p. 306.
55. *Ibid*, 1st ed., p. 132.
56. *Ibid*., 1st ed, pp. 132 ff.
57. *IBI*, p. 306.
58. *JISOA*, Vol. XV; *Oriental Art*, Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 141 ff.
59. Roerich, op. cit., pp. 69 ff.
60. See *TBIS*, p. 66.
61. *JISOA*, Vol. XV, 1947.
62. *TLP*, Figs. 201-204 of plate 275, and Fig. 205 of plate 276.

SEVEN

Iconographic Terminology

For the correct identification of an image or for the proper appreciation of its symbolism, we mostly refer to the relevant texts containing the descriptions of the deities. These iconographic accounts often use terminologies of a technical nature or having some mystic meaning exclusive to them. The image-makers, following the prescriptions of these texts, used to understand, according to their respective intellectual and technical accomplishment, their meanings and technicalities. A student of iconography has also to learn them in order to be able to understand the language of visual symbolism expressed through the limbs and lineaments of icons. Most important of these terms and terminologies are those pertaining to the hand-poses (*mudrā*) and sitting or standing stance (*āsana*)¹ of the deities.

So far as the study of Buddhist *āsanas* and *mudrās* is concerned, valuable contribution has, however, been made by Burgess, Waddell, Coomaraswamy, Poduval, Przyluski, and many others.² In their masterly expositions on art and iconography, Foucher, Bhattacharyya, Benerjea, Saraswati, and Mallmann have done useful work in this regard.³ But no comprehensive work on technical terms connected with Indian Buddhist iconography has yet been undertaken by any scholar. Saunder's book on *mudrās*⁴ is no doubt helpful, but it is concerned more with Japanese and Chinese Buddhist hand-gestures.

In fact, some comprehensive work devoted to the exposition of the exact nature and significance of the various *mudrās* and *āsanas* of Indian Buddhist images is a desideratum. The need for such a work is felt more by a student of Buddhist iconography, who often finds himself in utter confusions when he comes across altogether different interpretations of a particular *mudrā* or *āsana* given by different scholars. As for example, the interpretation of *paryāṅkāśana*, which, according to Bhattacharyya,⁵ is an 'attitude in which case the legs are placed one upon the other with both the soles visible', whereas Banerjea⁶ takes it to mean 'a sitting posture in

which both the legs are made to dangle down from whatever type of seat the figure sits on'. Under the circumstances, it is extremely difficult to know the correct meaning of the term.

It appears that both Bhattacharyya and Banerjea, while exposing the above-mentioned term, missed the word *paryāṅka*, meaning a couch or a seat, suffixed with the word *āsana* in the formation of the compound: *paryāṅkāśana*. Taken note of this, *paryāṅkāśana* presumably means seated or 'standing'⁷ on a couch or some kind of seat (*paryāṅka*). A variant of *paryāṅkāśana* is *ardhaparyāṅkāśana*. The former applies to the cases where both the legs are placed on the *paryāṅka* or the seat itself, and the latter to those where one of the legs dangles down or is raised above the seat, or where one of the knees is raised above the *paryāṅka*. As a matter of fact, the latter modes are virtually *ardha* (half-way) *paryāṅkāśana*.

According to the above specification, *paryāṅkāśana* may be of two principal types: *vajraparyāṅkāśana* and *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*. Similarly, *ardhaparyāṅkāśana* may also be of two basic forms: *lālītāsana* and *mahārājālīlāsana*. In the Buddhist iconographic texts, the terms like *vajrāsana*, *padmāsana*, and even *dhyānasana*⁸ are usually used as synonyms for *vajraparyāṅkāśana* (sometimes simply referred to as *paryāṅkāśana*), which refers to the mode of sitting in which the two legs are firmly (*vajra*) locked so that both the soles of the feet are visible. This mode of sitting emphasises the firmness (*vajra*) of the posture, and also on the point that, in such an attitude, both the legs are placed on the seat (*paryāṅka*). This is obviously the posture of sitting, on a raised seat, with the legs bent cross-wise (*nisīdati pallaṅkaṁ ābhujitvā*), mentioned in the *Dīgha-Nikāya*.⁹ Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhavam* also evidently refers to the same mode of sitting through the well-known expression: *paryāṅkabandham*, which also alludes to a seat or a couch (*paryāṅka*) as the concomitant of this mode of sitting.

With regard to the interpretation of the term *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*, some confusion has been created by Bhattacharyya, who took it first as meaning 'seated on an animal'¹⁰ and then as 'seated on a man'.¹¹ But both these interpretations fail to fit in with the sitting mode of many images described to be in the *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*.¹² It has to be noted that this is nothing but a variant of the sitting posture already explained above, and that the word *sattva* does not mean here either a 'man' or an 'animal'. It has the same meaning as that of *sattva* in the terms like *Bodhisattva* or *Vajrasattva*, namely, mercy of *karuṇā*. In other words, the term *sattvaparyāṅkāśana* refers to a relaxed or benign (*sattva*/*karuṇā*) attitude of sitting on a *paryāṅka*. Mallmann has explained it as a mode of sitting in which the legs are placed one upon the other, the sole of the right foot being visible.¹³

There is, however, not much of confusion with regard to the interpretation of the well-known *mudrās* like *abhaya*, *varada*, *bhūmiśparśa*, *dharmacakra* or *vyākhyāna*, *vitarka*, *tarjanī*, etc. But there are many other *mudrās* the meanings of which are not always immediately clear. The meanings of many such *mudrās* are often explained in the texts at the places where they are mentioned, and, sometimes, their meanings are to be obtained from the contexts under which reference is made to them.

In the Mañjuvara-maṇḍala section of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, there is the description of a form of the goddess Cundā having twenty-six hands, of which the principal pair is stated to be in the *mūlamudrā*.¹⁴ Bhattacharyya interpreted this as 'akin to the *Dharmacakra-Mudrā* displayed by Vairocana'.¹⁵ Conze is also of the opinion that 'the *mūlamudrā* of the many-armed Chundā is similar to the gesture of teaching'.¹⁶ In a latter writing, Lohuizen de Leeuw observes: '...in my opinion Bhattacharyya was fully justified when he interpreted this attitude as the *dharmacakramudrā* on the basis that Chundā is an emanation of the Dhyānī Buddha Vairocana who displays the same gesture'.¹⁷ But on a closer examination, the interpretation of *mūlamudrā* put forward by Bhattacharyya, and carried through by Conze and Lohuizen de Leeuw, does not hold good.

Lohuizen is inclined to interpret *mūlamudrā* as identical with *dharmacakramudrā* simply because Cundā is an emanation of the Dhyānī Buddha Vairocana who displays the last-named gesture. But it should be borne in mind that there is no hard and fast rule that the characteristic *mudrā* of the Dhyānī Buddha is also to be displayed by the gods and goddesses emanated from him. Although the *dharmacakramudrā* is the typical hand-pose of the Dhyānī Buddha Vairocana, there are, at the same time, many gods and goddesses emanated from him but having no connection whatsoever with that *mudrā*.¹⁸ Moreover, the goddess Prajñāpāramitā who almost invariably displays the *dharmacakramudrā*, in her principal pair of hands, is an emanation not of the Dhyānī Buddha Vairocana, but of Akṣobhya.¹⁹

Many multi-armed images of Cundā displaying the *dharmacakramudrā* have, of course, been described by Lohuizen and the identification of those images also seems to be above doubt. But it should be borne in mind that the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* prescribes the *mūlamudrā* only for the twenty-six-armed form of Cundā, and not for all her multi-handed forms, whereas none of the images described by Lohuizen is twenty-six-handed.²⁰ Judged from this point of view, Lohuizen's equation of the *mūlamudrā* with the *dharmacakramudrā* does not seem to be based on sound logic, because a typical iconographic feature present in a few forms of a goddess can hardly be taken for granted as a veritable iconographic characteristic of the other forms even of the same deity.²¹

Bhattacharyya, Conze, and Lohuizen confused the *mūlamudrā* with the *dharmacakramudrā*, because they missed the few lines that follow the description of the twenty-six-armed form of Cundā in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*. There the meaning of the *mūlamudrā* has been clearly explained, although all scholars, except Mallmann,²² unfortunately did not take any notice of it. The following is the description of the *mūlamudrā* given in the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*:

*Sampuṭāñjalīm kṛitvā tarjanyā madhyamāmadhyaparvaṇi kuṇḍalākāreṇāvas-thāpyaṅguṣṭhau tarjanipārśvamūle dhārayedityasyā mūlamudrā.*²³

It means : Her (Cundā's) *mūlamudrā* is to be formed by folding the hands, and then forming a sort of ring with the index fingers at the middle portion of the conjoined mid-fingers, and finally placing the thumbs at the root of the index fingers,

The description of *mūlamudrā* as given above is not, however, very explicit; but undoubtedly the description relates to a hand-pose quite different from the *dharmacakramudrā* which is nothing but the combined representation of the *jñāna-* and *vyākhyānamudrās*, the left hand being in the former and the right in the latter.²⁴ As a matter of fact, there is hardly any doubt that the *mūlamudrā* is altogether different from the *dharmacakramudrā*. It has to be mentioned that in the *Sādhana-mālā*, there is the description of one *cundāmudrā*, which is prescribed not for any form of Cundā, but for the worshipper to exhibit the gesture in his hand during his worship of the goddess Cundā. The description is as follows:

*Hastadvayena añjaliṃ kṛtvā tarjanidvayaṃ madhyamāmadhye kuṇḍalākāreṇa lagnaṃ aṅguṣṭhau pārśvataḥ.*²⁵

The description of the *cundāmudrā* is thus found to be almost the same as that of the *mūlamudrā*. The descriptions obviously refer to the same hand-gesture—the names are only different. In the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*, the *mūlamudrā* is referred to as her (Cundā's) *mudrā* (*iti asyā mūlamudrā*), and a similar reference is also made in the *Sādhana-mālā* with regard to the *cundāmudrā* (*ityaṃ cundāyā mudrā*).²⁶ In the *Sādhana-mālā*, it is stated that the goddess is to be invoked with her *bījamantra* (germ-syllable) which is 'oṃ caḷe cule cunde svāhā', together with the *cundāmudrā*.²⁷ As the *Sādhana-mālā* seems to relate the *cundāmudrā* with the very origin (*mūla*) of the goddess Cundā, it was quite appropriate for the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* to refer to the same *mudrā* as the *mūlamudrā* (i.e., the germinatory *mudrā*), of the goddess. It may be noted that the prefix 'mūla' in the word *Mūlamudrā*, does not mean principal, chief,²⁸ or even fundamental,²⁹ but it means original or germinatory. It should be mentioned in this connection that the description of the *kāmamudrā* as found in the *Bṛīhat-Tantrasāra*³⁰ is almost the same as that of the *mūla* or *cundāmudrā*, described above. Moreover, there is a striking correspondence between the latter and the Japanese Buddhist *mudrā* named *Mushofusho-in* (Chinese : *Wu-so-pu-chih-yin*).³¹

NOTES

1. The term *āsana*, in Buddhist iconography, refers both to the sitting posture as well as to the standing stance. Expression like *pratyāliḍhāsana* can be often met with in the texts.
2. Burgess, J., 'Buddhist Mudrās', *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XV (1897), pp. 24 ff; Waddell, L.A., *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism*, London, 1895, pp. 136 ff; Coomaraswamy, A.K., 'Mudrā, Muddā', *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. XLVIII, 1928, pp. 279 ff; Coomaraswamy and Gopalakrishnayya, *The Mirror of Gesture*; Poduval, R.K., *Administrative Report of the Archaeological Department, Travancore State*, 1107 M.E., pp. 6 ff; Przyluski, J., 'Mudrā,' *Indian Culture*, Vol. II, No. 4, 1963, pp. 715 ff.
3. *Etude*, IBI, DHI, AVA, MANJU, SIS.
4. Saunders, F.D., *Mudrā, A Study of symbolic gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculptures*, New York, 1960.

5. *IBI*, p. 435.
6. *DHI*, p. 272.
7. The expressions like *ardhaparyāṅkāśana nṛityaratā* found often in the texts clearly show that the word *āsana* referred to the dancing, as such to the standing, stance as well. See also Note 1 above.
8. The term *dhyānāsana*, of course, does not merely refer to the mode of sitting, i.e., the disposition of the legs, but also to the associated hand-gesture: *dhyānamudrā* involving the disposition of the palms of the hands one above the other and finally the placement of the same on the lap.
9. *Dīgha Nikāya*, Pali Text Society edition, Vol. I, p. 71.
10. *IBI*, 1st ed., p. 132.
11. *Ibid.*, 2nd. ed., p. 306.
12. Mahāmāyūrī is often described in the texts as in the *sattvaparyāṅkāśana*, but none of her images found so far is seated in either of the attitudes described by Bhattacharyya.
13. *AVA*, pp. 258-260.
14. *NSP*, p. 49.
15. *IBI*, p. 223, fn. 1.
16. *Oriental Art*, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 106. Conze made an unfortunate mistake by stating that the *mūlamudrā* is referred to in the *SM*, and with reference to the 16-armed form of Cundā. He had confused between the *SM* and the *NSP*, and between the Twenty-six-armed form and the sixteen-armed form of Cundā.
17. Lohuizen de Leeuw, Van. J.E., The Paṭṭikera Chundā and Variation of her image, *N. K. Bhattasali Commemoration Volume*, Dacca 1966, p. 126.
18. *IBI*, pp. 206 ff.
19. *SM*, Nos. 151, 153; *Ekallavīra-Caṇḍa-Mahāroṣaṇa-tantra*, Ms. G. 9089, fol. 41A.
20. Lohuizen, op. cit., pp. 119 ff.
21. Although the *dharmacakramudrā* is almost always displayed by Prajñāpāramitā, the No. 155 of the *SM* describes the goddess without any *mudrā*.
22. *Manju.*, p. 77, foot note 7.
23. *NSP*, p. 49.
24. *DHI*, p. 256; *SIS*, pp. 129 ff.
25. *SM*, Nos. 129-131.
26. Same as note 22 above. See also *SM*, No. 129.
27. *SM*, No. 131.
28. *IBI*, p. 223.
29. *Manju.*, p. 149.
30. Vasumati, ed., *Bṛihat-Tantrasāra*, p. 570.
31. Saunders, op. cit., p. 115.

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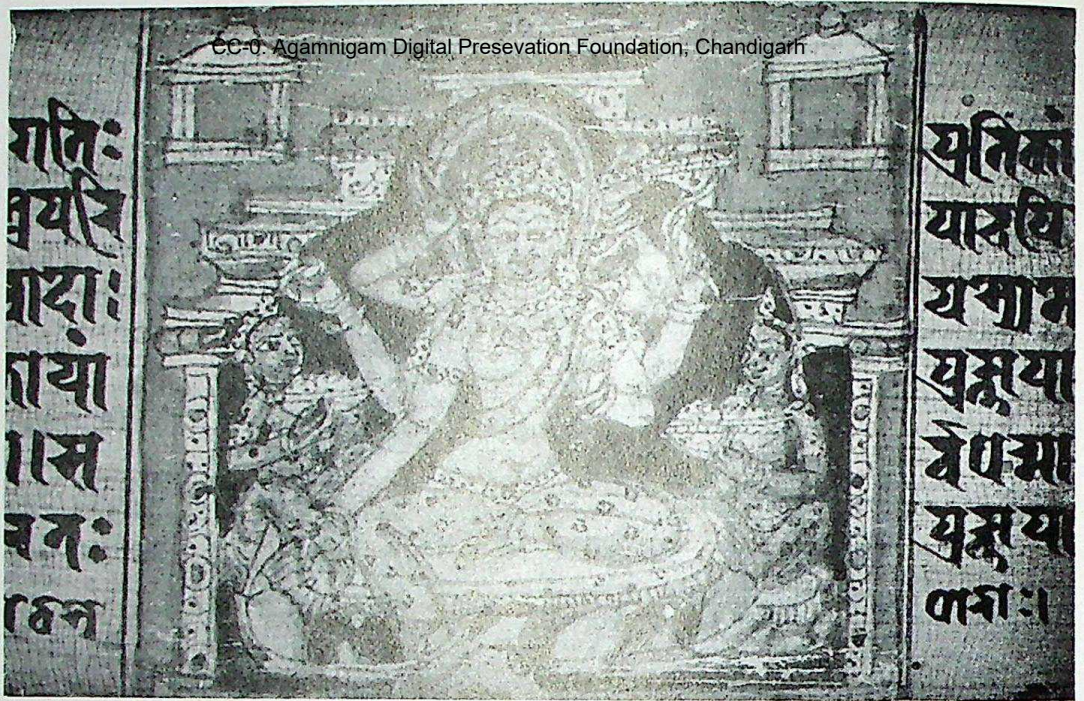
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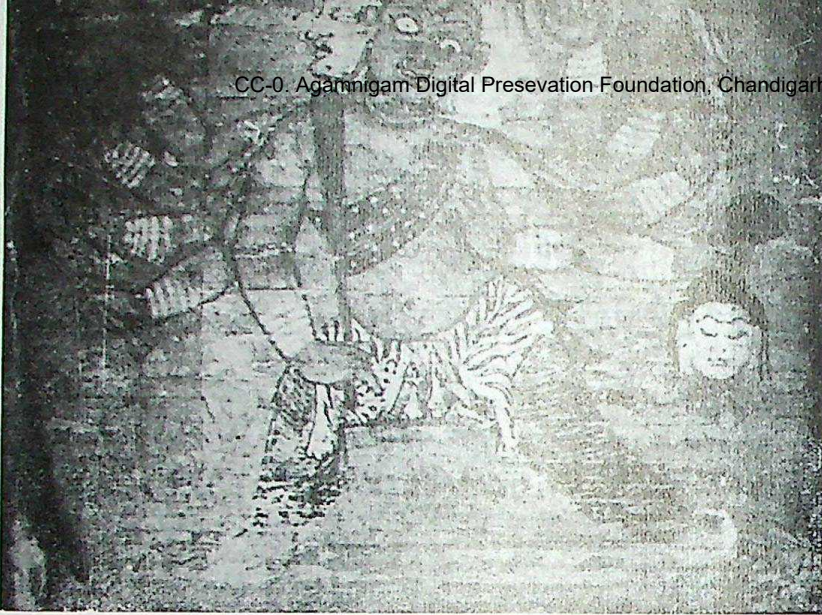
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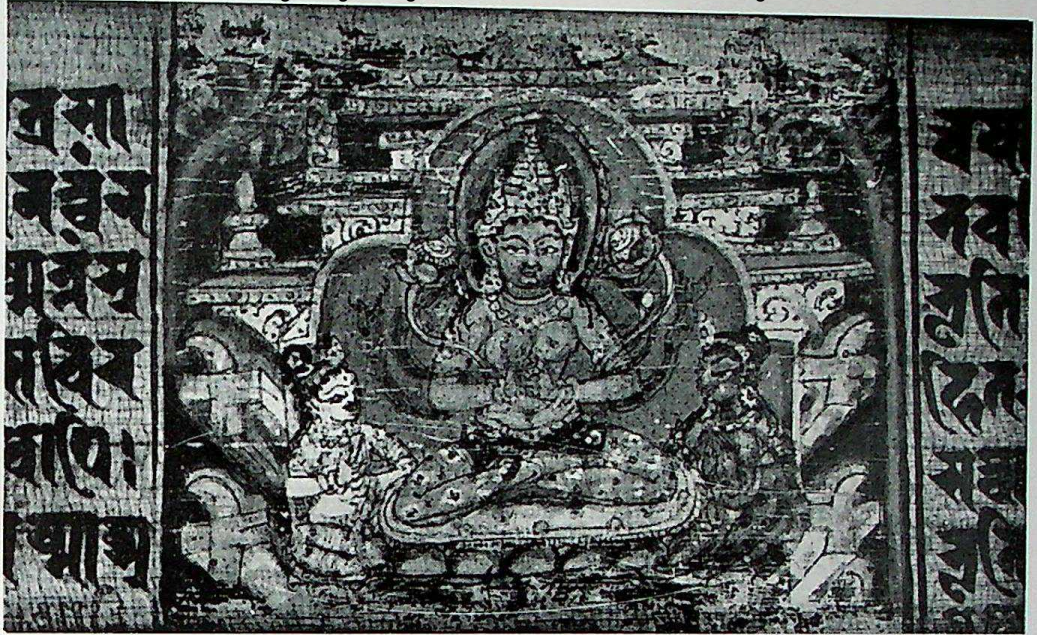
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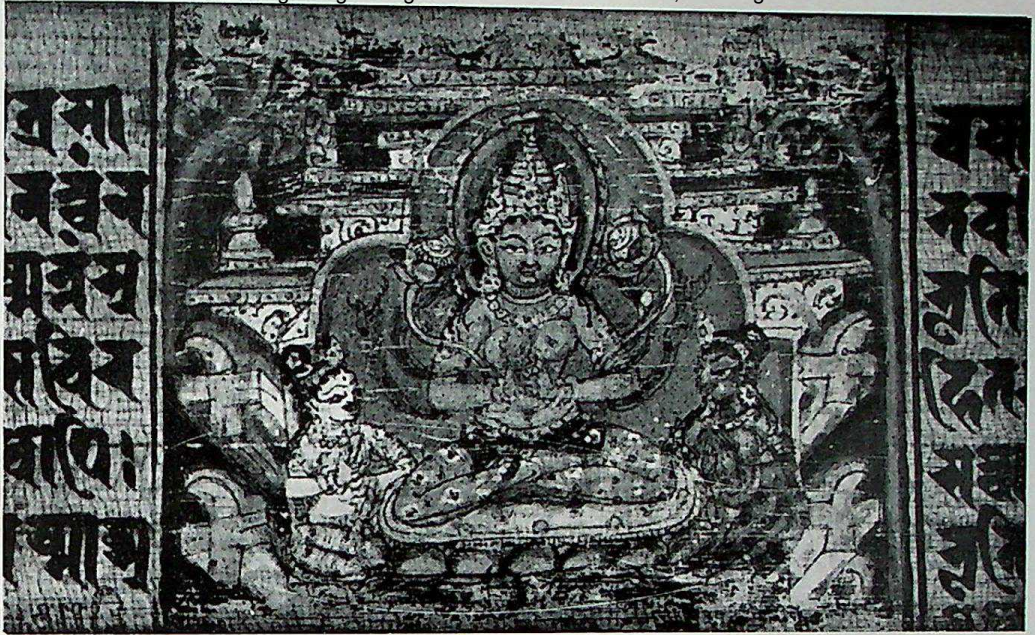
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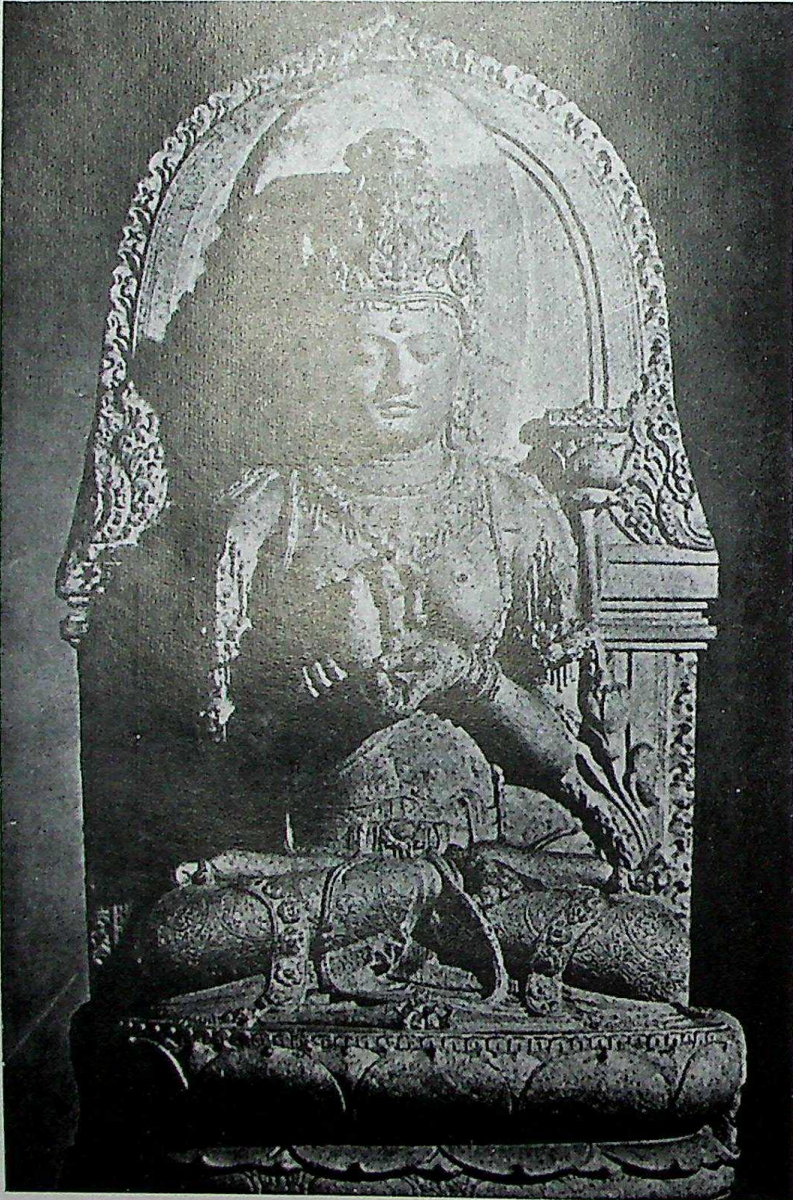
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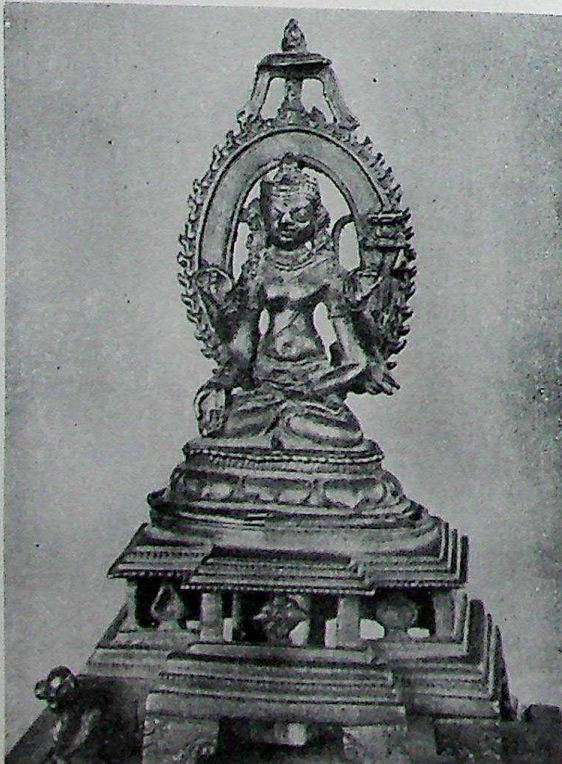


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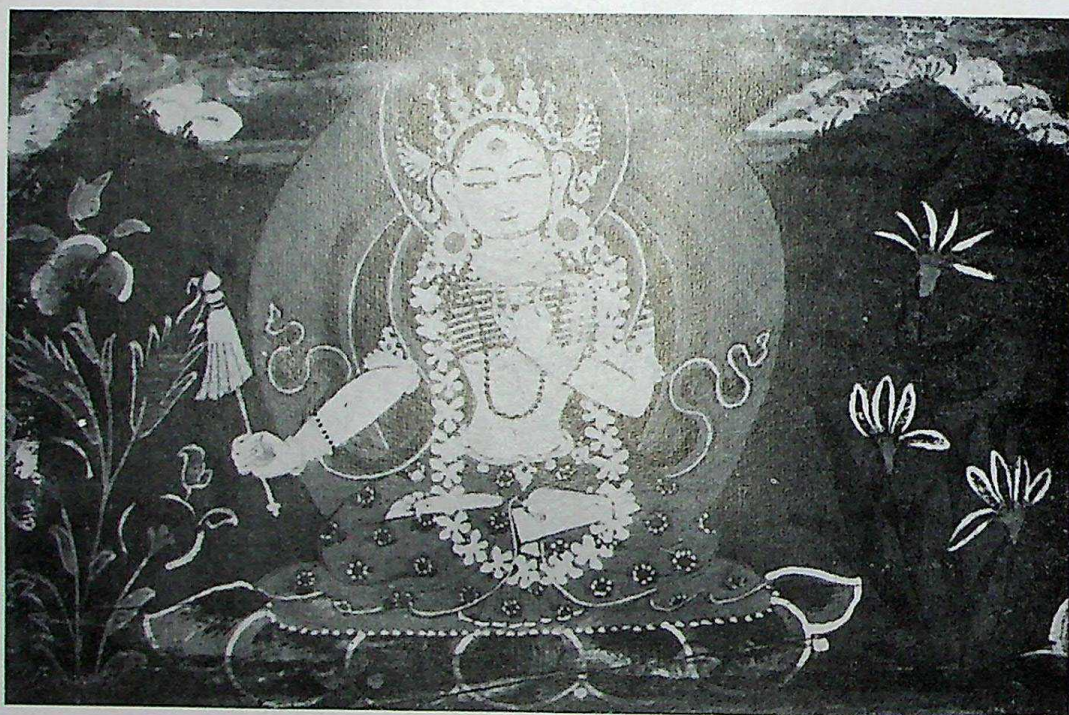
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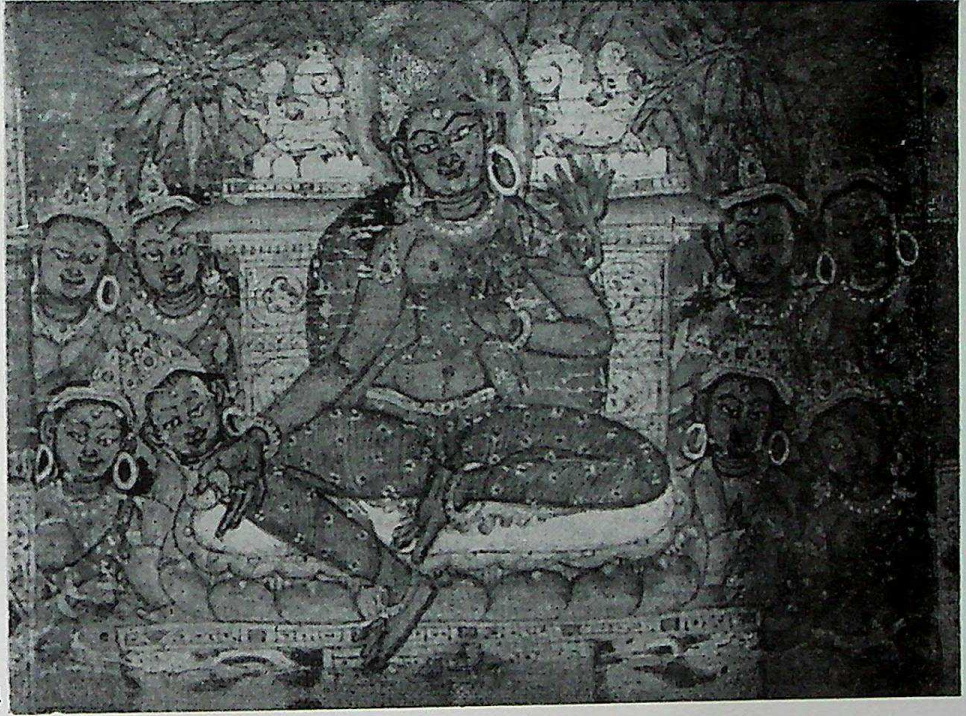


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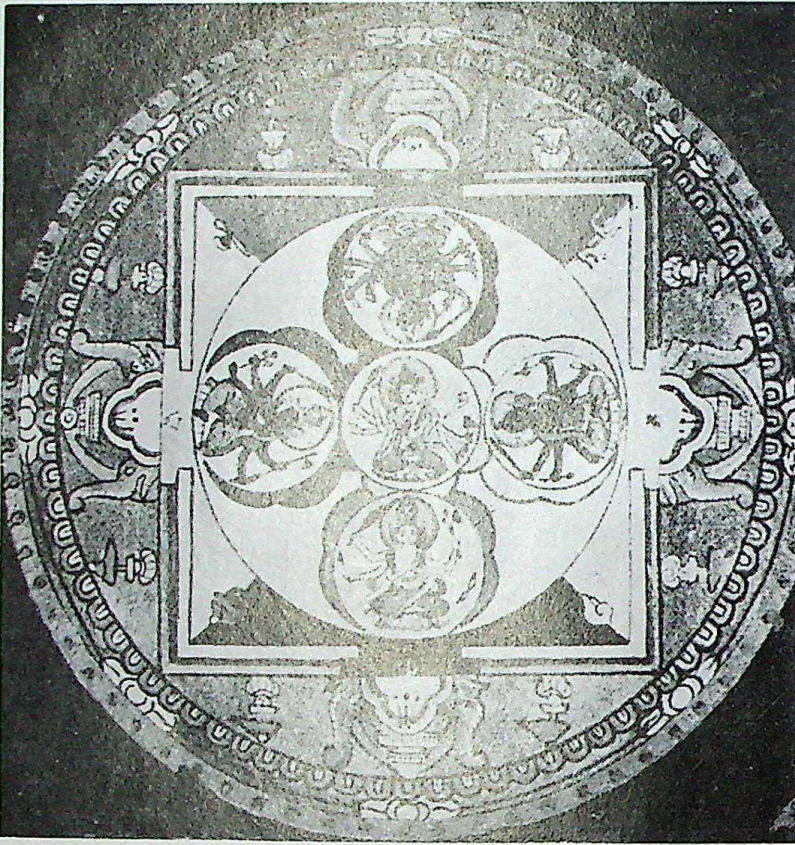
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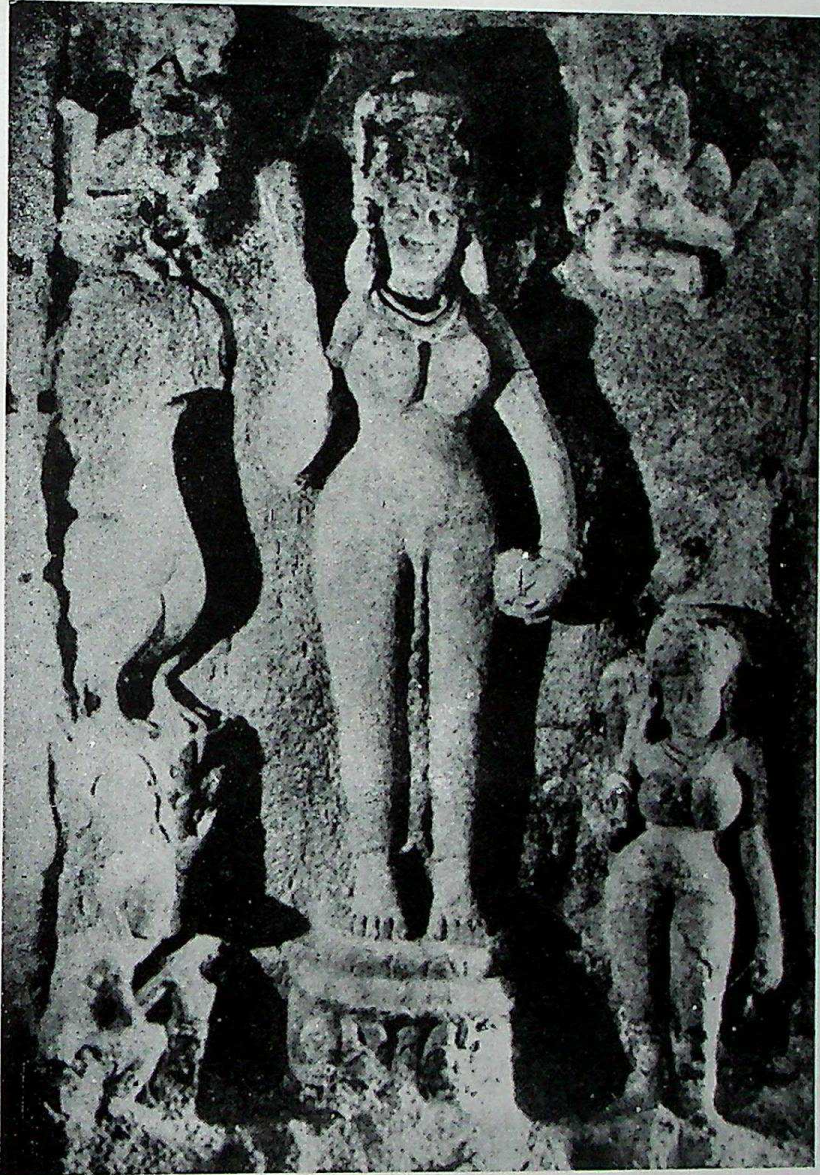
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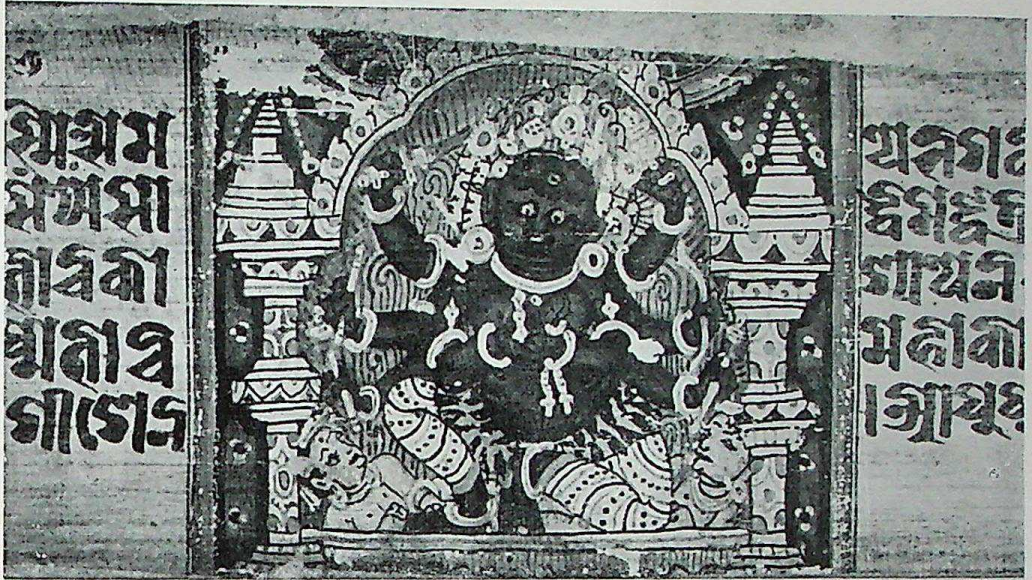


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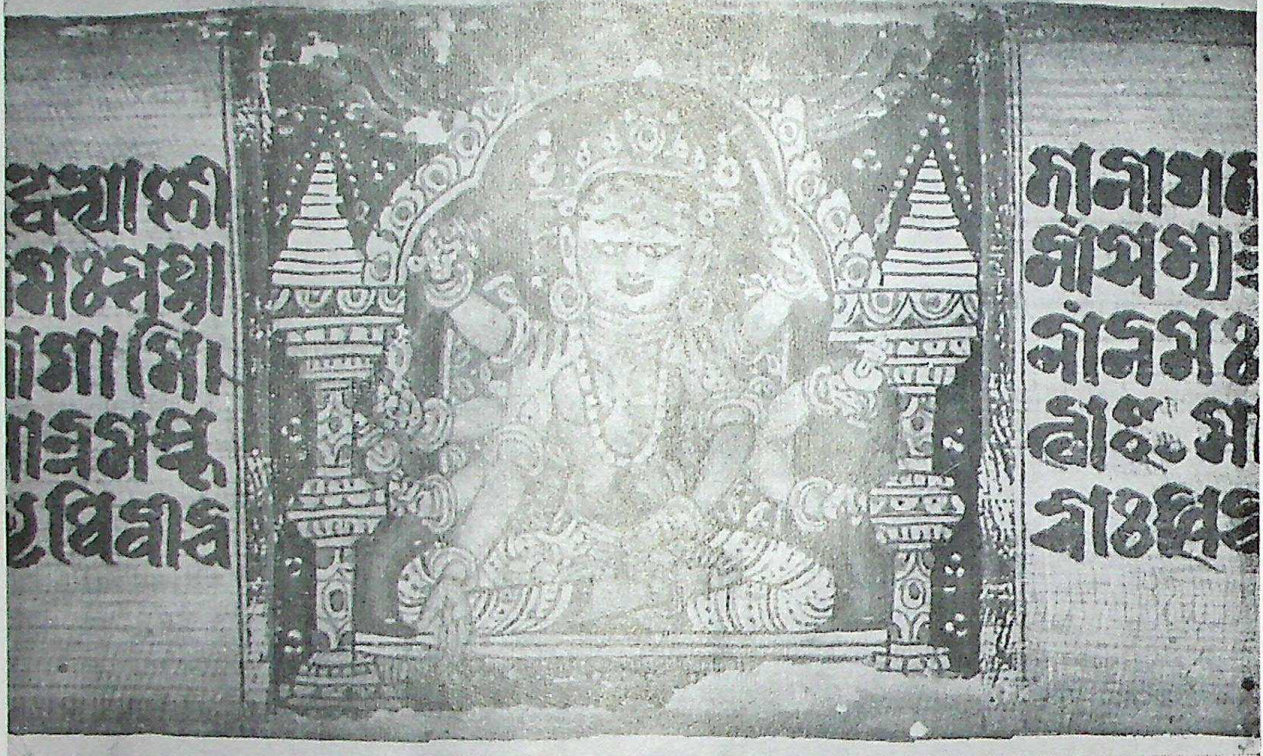
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